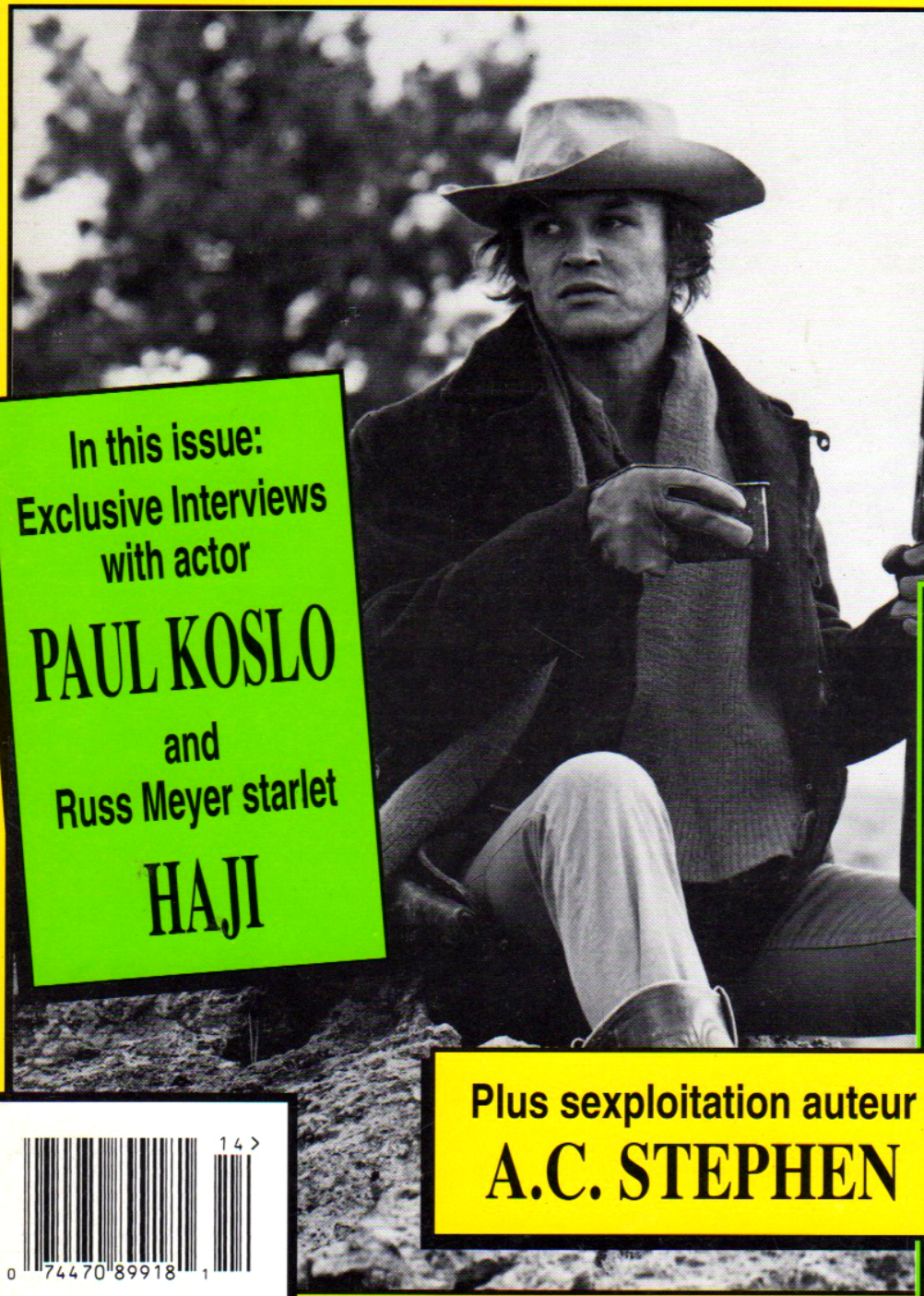
Your Guide to Cult Movies, Arthouse Oddities, Drive-In Swill, and Underground Obscurities!

SHOCK CINEMA

NUMBER 14

$ 5.00



Reviewed in this issue:
Coming Apart
Forty Deuce • Angst
Go Ask Alice
Lessons of Darkness
Radio On • The Idiots
Girl of the Night
These Are the Damned
Coffin Joe pornos
Rapture movies
and many more!
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underground flicks!

In this issue:
Exclusive Interviews
with actor
PAUL KOSLO
and
Russ Meyer starlet
HAJI

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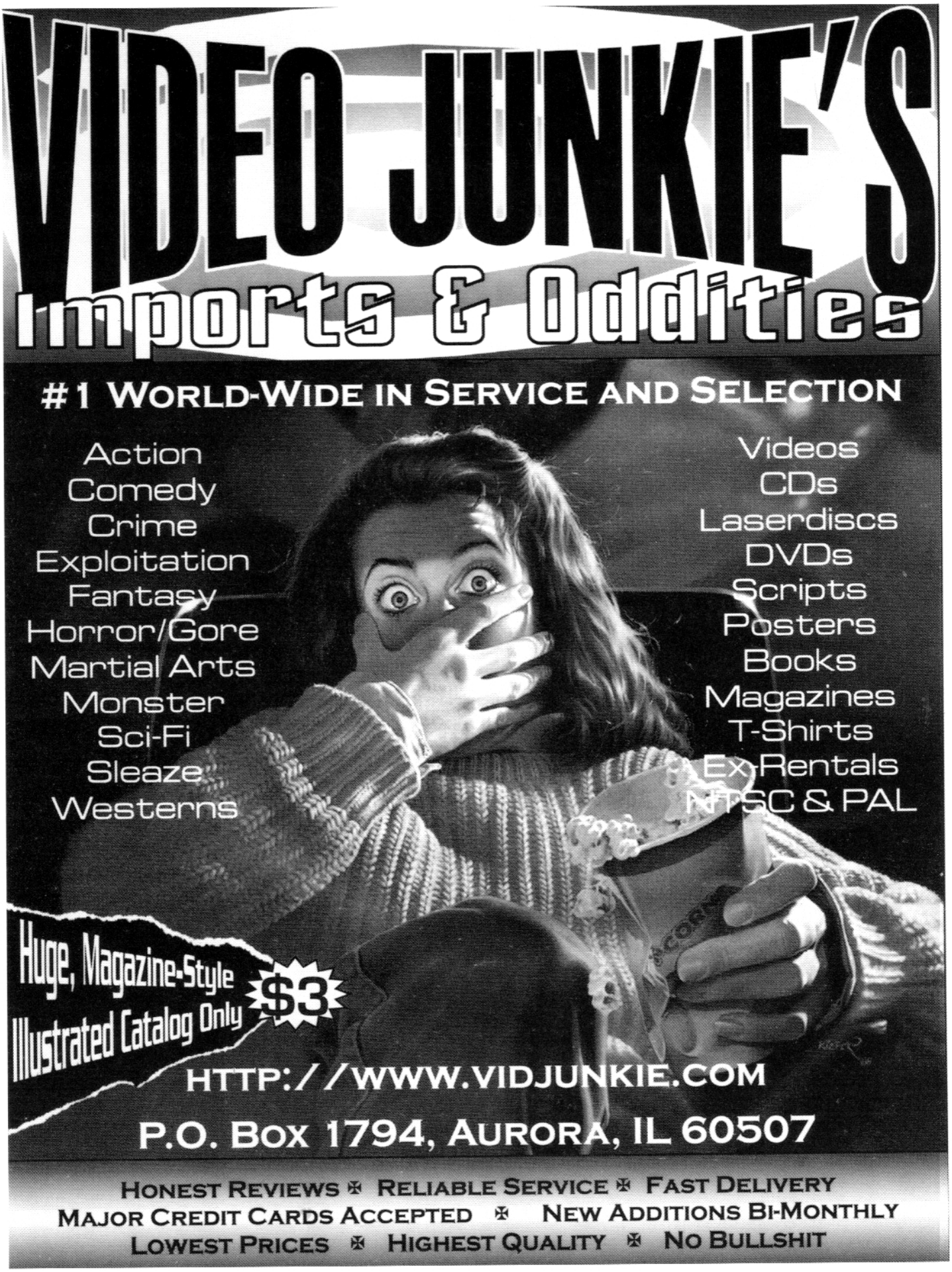

A Ditch Gang Production (2018)

EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS

Welcome to another dose of SHOCK CINEMA, which again focuses on an array of mind-bending, misguided and obscure movies. This issue is heavy with bizarre flicks from around-the-globe—tackling sex, horror, music, crime, and just about any anti-social agenda you can imagine. In addition to highly-opinionated reviews, this issue includes three fine interviews, with people who helped make this industry as strange 'n' twisted as it is. First, we've got the amusing and informative Paul Koslo, who has appeared in everything from biker-fare like THE LOSERS, '70s action-faves like FREEBIE AND BEAN, and even HEAVEN'S GATE. We also have a talk with legendary sex-pic director A.C. Stephen (Stephen Apostolof), who discusses his friendship with Ed Wood and belovedly-bare film legacy. Finally, following up on our Russ Meyer Q&A in the previous issue, there's a chat with FASTER PUSSYCAT! KILL! KILL! starlet Haji, all about her wild career. If you're a newcomer to SC, thanks for giving it a look. Meanwhile, long-time readers know that they should have the liquor cabinet filled and the beer chilled, so when you read about these films, you can approach them in the same way I first watched and wrote about them.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICES / BACK ISSUES: Single issues are $5 apiece and the 4-issue subscription price is $18 **(with all checks made out to Steve Puchalski)**. As usual, subscribers can keep track of when to renew by checking the upper right corner of their mailing label...For overseas readers, single issues are $8...In addition, if you're hot for back issues, #6 & 7 are $4 apiece, while the substantially-slicker # 8 through 13 are $5 each. All issues are sent via First Class Mail.

Hard to believe, but for the first time in the history of SHOCK CINEMA, I have little to say in my editorial. If you're familiar with my older issues, I used to fill pages with various rants, events and growing psychoses. Nowadays, I'm hard-pressed to come up with anything that would sound interesting to even a casual voyeur. I'm still happily married? We acquired our first (lovably freakish) cat? Several old friends have gotten married (which gives me an opportunity to send best wishes to both Chris D. and Karl W.)? I actually enjoy our spacious new apartment (unlike our earlier, cramped, East Village roach-a-rama)? The truth is, I still have my fair share of chaotic problems (too much booze, too much work, and far too many unwatched videos), but at the moment, everything in life is going so freakin' well that I'm happy for a change, and don't feel like bitching this time around. Instead, I'm going to use this space for a last-minute review that doesn't fit into any other section of the magazine. Prompted by the recent double-Oscar win by the quickly-grating Roberto Benigni (remember how much we adored him in SON OF THE PINK PANTHER? We didn't.), I was compelled to include a first-time SCREENPLAY REVIEW of a much-earlier Holocaust-comedy, with many similarities to this arthouse hit. Allow me to direct my bile towards this oft-discussed, never-screened cult-movie cesspool. Enjoy. 4/23/99

"THE DAY THE CRIED"

(A FILM BY JERRY LEWIS)

Screenplay Review: THE DAY THE CLOWN CRIED (1972). Although it's impossible to criticize a finished film on the basis of the script alone, I've seen more than enough Jerry Lewis films to know how badly he can stumble when starring *and* directing in moments of pathos. This script, which weighs in at a whopping 164 pages (since one-page equals approximately a minute of screen time, it's longer than THE ENGLISH PATIENT). Originally planned as a Summer '74 release and with much of it funded by Jerry's own private cash (after his producer ran dry), the flick has spent the last quarter-century in litigation limbo (since it turned out that Lewis didn't actually own the script, after all). While a Good Movie would have people clamoring to settle the case, I doubt anyone (with the exception of Jerry and his hardcore fans) cares if this ever sees the light of day. Scripted by Joan O'Brien and Charles Denton (with "additional material"—uh oh—provided by Jer) and filmed in Paris and Stockholm, it's the circa-1940's story of Helmut Dorque (more often spelled as Doork), an old clown who's fired from a German circus. After drunkenly impersonating Hitler in front of the Gestapo, he's tossed into a prison camp, where poor Helmut is abused by bullying inmates and guards. Unfortunately, there's no reason to sympathize with the character, since he's an unbearable, self-pitying sort, who mouths off at the most inappropriate times. As years pass and WWII deepens, the prison becomes the home of Jewish women and children, with Helmut discovering THE CHILDREN NEED HIM AND LOVE HIM! With the help of other prisoners, he creates a make-shift clown suit and make-up, and begins entertaining the tots. When Helmut is beaten by a guard in front of the children, he even pretends that's it's all part of his comedy routine. Later, Doork is used by the Nazis to keep a boxcar full of children quietly amused, only to accidentally (oops!) winds up in Auschwitz, where this "Judas goat" leads the smiling kids straight into gas chambers. Proudly labeled "A Family Film" on its intro page, this is a painfully obvious story, overflowing with stock characters, sledgehammer discussions, and maudlin monologues. Still, if played totally straight (and in the hands of a more appropriate director), this had a slim chance of working. There's *no* chance here, since script-notes explain how even dramatic moments (like being abused by a guard when Helmut refuses to eat, or trying to get dressed when his clothes are totally frozen) "will work comically as well." It's easy to imagine Jerry doing his worn-out, slapstick schtick in the middle of a supposedly-gritty concentration camp—and just how embarrassing it must be. More than simply misguided, this makes you question your own tolerence for cinematic swill.

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Cover photo: Paul Koslo in **JOE KIDD**.

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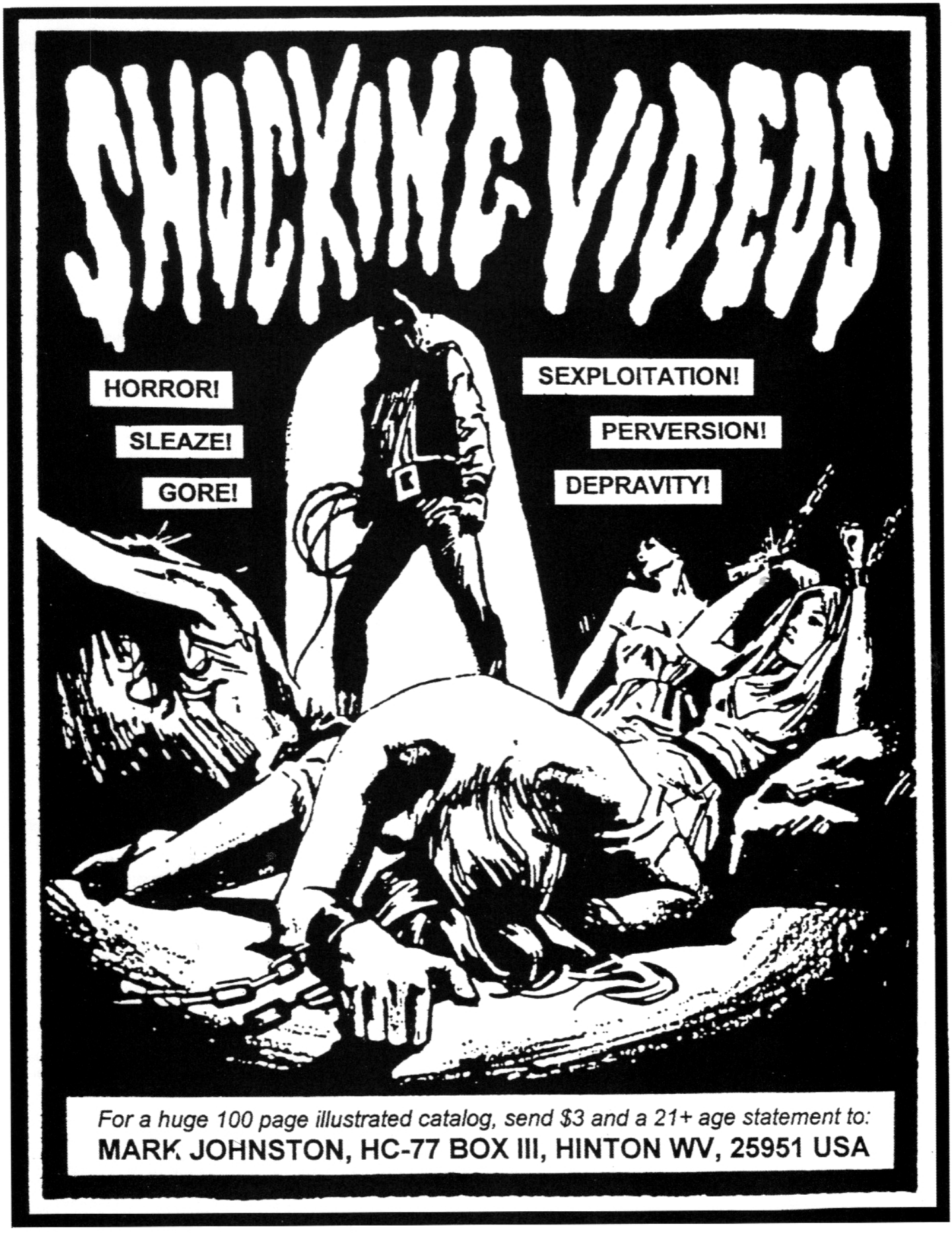
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SHOCK CINEMA TALKS WITH PERENNIAL PSYCHO-VILLAIN

PAUL KOSLO

Interview by Chris Poggiali

"Not everyone knows my name," veteran actor Paul Koslo admits, "but they all recognize my face. It's incredible. I can be in Russia and people will still come up to me and say" — he slips into a Russian accent — "You are the man on the television!"

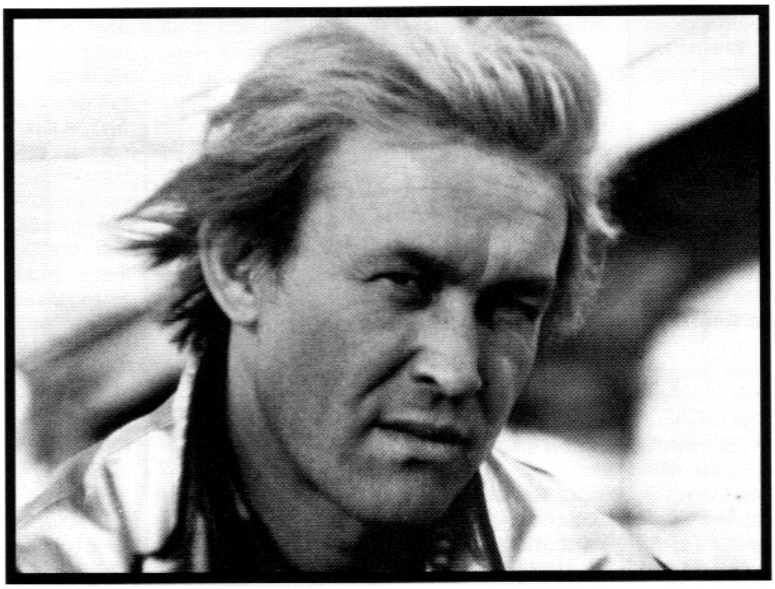
He certainly is. During the 1970s and '80s, it was a rare moment indeed when you turned on the TV and didn't see Koslo in one thing or another — from guest spots on shows such as MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE, GUNSMOKE, THE ROCKFORD FILES, CHiPs, and THE A-TEAM, to supporting gigs in made-for-TV movies and miniseries like THE SACKETTS, THE GLITTER DOME and ROOTS: THE NEXT GENERATION. He's been all over the big screen as well, turning up in everything from the existential car chase film VANISHING POINT and the Disney comedy SCANDALOUS JOHN to the bikers-in-'Nam classic THE LOSERS. Frequently cast as psychos and lowlifes, Koslo was the bad guy in three Charles Bronson movies, and has also played the villain against such Hollywood legends as John Wayne, Clint Eastwood and Paul Newman. He was beaten to a pulp in FREEBIE AND THE BEAN, ground up into scrap metal in CLEOPATRA JONES, and driven through a storefront window in THE STONE KILLER — just a few of the many unforgettable moments that have earned him a place in the SHOCK CINEMA Hall of Fame.

He was born Manfred Koslowski in Germany in 1944, to Polish and Russian parents, and his family emigrated to Canada when he was six years old. "I had a very strict upbringing — strict to the point of mental and physical abuse from my father, who had been a Prussian soldier," Koslo reveals. "He was a very strict disciplinarian and a real control freak, and we didn't see eye-to-eye at all. I left home just before I turned 13, because he tried to kill me one night with a knife. My mom got between us and took the knife out of his hand, but he started beating the crap out of me instead. So I left home, and I never went back."

Barely in his teens, Koslo took a job fighting forest fires in British Columbia — "where they have 15- or 20,000 men fighting those big fires sometimes" — and worked 3 months on one blaze alone. Afterward, he hitchhiked across North America twice with the money he earned from firefighting.

He worked a few jobs in Vancouver, finished high school, and was awarded a scholarship through the Ford Foundation to study acting at the prestigious National Theatre School in Montreal. The name change came next. "In the early '60s, it wasn't fashionable to have a weird name," he says with a laugh, "so I dropped the second half of 'Koslowski' and took 'Paul' as my first name."

It's now thirty-five years later, and even though his name doesn't turn up nearly as often as it did during the '70s and '80s, Koslo is still as busy as ever. In addition to his recent movie and TV roles, the actor has produced, directed, and/or appeared in a number of stage productions for the MET Theater in Hollywood, which he owns with actors James Gammon and Timothy Scott. He also owns and operates the landmark Lake Hughes Trading Post and Rock Hotel in Lake Hughes, California. Luckily for us at SHOCK CINEMA, he was gracious enough to spend a few hours discussing his exciting life and career. —*Chris Poggiali*



SC: What inspired you to become an actor?

Koslo: As a kid, I used to play act and put on shows with my friends, like most kids tend to do. When I was seven, I discovered a Tarzan movie starring Gordon Scott, and I instantly related to it. The dreams I was having, the playacting — what was going on inside my head was up there on the screen. That movie really made a big impression on me. In fact, four or five years ago, I ran into Gordon Scott at a restaurant in Santa Monica. A mutual friend introduced us, and I told him that story — that I had become an actor because of him — and he hugged me and cried. It was quite a moving moment, very touching and poignant for both of us. He was really a total gentleman.

SC: How did you make the leap from student acting to professional acting?

Koslo: Lady Luck reared her beautiful head one day. I was walking across the parking lot of the CBC [the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] when four guys in suits saw me, and one of them said, *"Hey you! You look Russian! Can you act?"* I said "As a matter of fact, I just finished a season at Stratford with the National Theatre." So he said, *"Be in my office at two o'clock. I want you to read for a part."* It was Rodión Románovich Raskólnikov in CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, with Genevieve Bujold, and I got the part. It was a teleplay on video, a 2-1/2 hour show that played on PBS, and someone at the William Morris Agency saw it and signed me. So I went to Hollywood in 1966 — and I've been here ever since. I was with William Morris, but because I was Canadian and didn't have another job lined up, I couldn't get a work permit. Late in 1967 I went to New York and auditioned for *Hair*, which was doing incredible business, and I replaced Gerry Ragni as Berger at the Biltmore Theater for about eight months.

SC: Your first movie was THE LOSERS?

Koslo: No, it was a little film called MANIAC. It had a couple of titles [including FLUX], but the original title was THE ZODIAC KILLER, and it was made by Jack Starrett and Richard Compton. Jack bet some guy from Vegas that he could make a two-hour, 35mm film for $15,000! He was one of those pug-nosed kind of guys in a bar in Vegas, and he said *"You're full of shit. Nobody could do that."* Jack said, "Gimme the damn money!" *"All right!"* So they got fifteen grand together, they got a script, and they shot this movie in six days, over three weekends. (Laughing) Oh, it was quite a movie! It was about this guy in a Frank Lloyd Wright house in Hollywood somewhere who knows thirteen girls who represent the twelve signs of the zodiac — Gemini being twins, right? — and for different reasons, and through different relationships that he has with them, he decides that they're not fit for human life, so he does away with them. It didn't say much, and if you tried to figure it out, you wouldn't have the foggiest idea what it was all about, but it looked good and it sounded good. I don't think it ever got released, but it led me to my next film, which Jack also directed, called THE LOSERS.

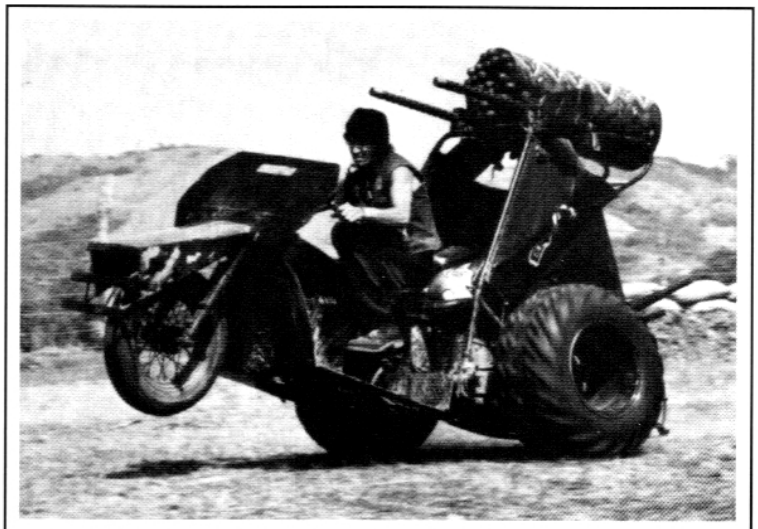
SC: Which must've been an amazing experience.

Koslo: Oh, it was, believe me. (Laughing) That was shot in the Philippines, and on our way over, we flew through a hurricane! The airplane did nosedives and fishtails and three-sixties in the air at 41,000 feet — and it did that for something like 23,000 feet! We were all screaming and crying and pissing all over ourselves. Sections of the luggage compartment fell down on people, the luggage went everywhere. Bill Smith and I were sitting in first class, and his wife Michelle was next to him. We looked at each other, like *"This is it, partner."* At 18- or 19,000 feet, the pilot stopped it from spinning at least — but it was going straight down! We were looking down at our feet,

y'know? The plane was shaking and vibrating so much. The pilot pulled it out at about 11,000 feet — and when we knew the plane was settling, there was a primal scream you could've heard back in New York. It brings tears to my eyes just thinking about it.

SC: Did things calm down once you got to the Philippines?

Koslo: Not really. (Laughing) The Vice President of the Philippines was a guest of honor in the dining room of this club where we were staying in the Manila Hilton. One of the guys in our gang [Houston Savage] got drunk that night. He was a nice guy, but he had some problems, and when he got drunk there was a real mean streak. So we were all being introduced to the patrons who were there eating, and this actor got up and told everybody they were all a bunch of "slopeheads" and told them to go fuck themselves. The Vice President of the Philippines had his bodyguards take him out back, where they pulled out guns to blow his brains out right there. Jack and Bill and the hotel general manager had to go out there and plead for his life. Otherwise, that guy would've been dog food. Later, I heard he was killed in Georgia, shotgunned by somebody in a drive-by, I think. The people in the Philippines were incredible, though. Very nice people. I had a great time there.



LEAPIN' LENA – Half motorcycle, half VW. Driven by Paul Koslo who plays Limpy in Fanfare Film Productions' "The Losers" opening .....at the .....Theatre.

SC: I really like Jack Starrett's movies. I think he's a very underrated director. What was it like working with him?

Koslo: Jack lived life to its fullest. I think his first name was Jack because of Jack Daniels. (Laughing) I think in another life he said, "I want my first name to be Jack, because I love Jack Daniels." A wonderful director, and he knew how to talk with actors, because he was an actor himself, and he went the extra mile to get what he needed. After shooting three weeks on a five-week shoot, he said, "Guys, I just found out that I haven't been paid the past three weeks." So we all called our agents in Hollywood, and sure enough, they hadn't received the checks either. The producer, Joe Solomon, was the last of the schlockmeisters. He was on the set, and he said, "No, there must be a mistake. We sent the checks." Of course, he hadn't, and Jack said, *"Guess what, boys? We're not gonna go back to work!"* Well, 48 hours later we all had cash, so we finished the picture. (Laughing) Solomon was the epitome of the Hollywood producer who's gonna fuck you any way he can. He got a wonderful picture for his money, too. THE LOSERS did really well for him. Without Jack, I don't think that picture would've made it.

SC: Was your next movie VANISHING POINT or THE OMEGA MAN?

Koslo: I went right from THE LOSERS to THE OMEGA MAN. What happened was, that guy Solomon — he never paid us any overtime for THE LOSERS. Instead of doing a 12-hour day, which is in the SAG contracts, we were doing 16, 18, sometimes 20 hours a day because we were shooting in the jungle. We had about a 3-1/2 hour drive to get to the location outside Manila, so we had these long days and all this overtime — and Solomon wasn't going to pay any of it. Lo and behold, as fate would have it, Charlton Heston was the lead in THE OMEGA MAN. I told him about this, and he got everybody their overtime pay! I think we made more money on that low-budget movie that we did for nothing than we made on our salary! Of course, it wasn't that good of an experience working with Charlton Heston. (Laughing) He was so big at the time, and so busy, that I had to do my close-ups opposite a mophead that the script lady held up where his head would be! I did my close-ups with a *mop* because Heston was talking to the President or somebody on his portable phone! But he went to bat for me with Solomon, and I really respect him for that.

SC: I heard that there was some trouble between Heston and his costar, Rosalind Cash, on that film.

Koslo: There was a lot of tension between them, yeah. No real trouble, just artistic differences. Rosalind was a very nice lady — a very opinionated lady — and extremely concerned about the image of African-American women on screen. But it was Heston's show. Boris Sagal, the director, had to take her aside a few times. It all worked out in the end. Heston was really nice to me, and I worked with him again years later on another picture, SOLAR CRISIS, which was a big $80 million dollar Japanese-funded film that nobody's heard of. You gotta give Heston credit — he sticks by his guns. Whatever his politics are, you gotta admire a guy who sticks by his guns.

SC: When I was in high school, I thought VANISHING POINT was the greatest movie ever made.

Koslo: Yeah, that's a real cult film. It still plays at a theatre in Paris, as I understand. Isn't that incredible? After all these years. Cleavon Little, who played the d.j. — he was a wonderful guy, and a great actor, too. Richard Sarafian's another renegade director. In fact, he also made that movie I just mentioned, SOLAR CRISIS. Guys like Starrett and Sarafian, even though they did good pictures with great people in them, they never really became big studio directors. They were just one-of-a-kind guys who didn't want to put up with all that shit.

SC: I watched VANISHING POINT again recently, and the stunt driving sequences are still fresh and exciting after nearly thirty years.

Koslo: That was Cary Loftin driving. People say he was one of the greatest drivers to ever get behind the wheel of a car. As a matter of fact, I just did a movie with Van Damme, and some of the guys on the set were talking about Cary. He died a few years ago, but he lived well into his 80s. VANISHING POINT was one of the first movies where you needed all these cars — they're all the same car, basically — but there are seven or eight of them because they keep breaking down. You need Challenger #1, #2, #3, and so on. One night coming home from location, Cary was driving one of the Challengers back to the hotel, and he passed some New Mexico state troopers going 145 miles an hour! (Laughing) He had four or five cop cars behind him with their lights on, but they couldn't catch up because they could only go about 125! So he drove into this little town and started to shut the car down. He pulled into a gas station, and I swear to God, he did a 360 in between the pumps and put the rear of the car — the gas tank — right in front of the super pump! He got out of the car like nothing happened, and the troopers busted his ass right there! (Laughing) Oh, you should've seen those cops! They were fuming! They took him in, and the producer had to explain to them that Cary had actually been *testing* the car — that he did a lot of these spinouts because he'd been having trouble with the car! (Laughing) I mean, you do have to test the cars, but you don't do it while you're driving home!

SC: I've never seen WELCOME HOME, SOLDIER BOYS. How is that?

Koslo: That's a very good picture that never got much play in this country. It's about four Green Berets who come back from Vietnam and don't get the "welcome home" they were expecting. A cop forces our hand, so we kill him, and then the townspeople start shooting at us until we finally revert back to what we were overseas: killing machines. We wipe out the entire town — 95 men, women, and children — and the army has to come in and finish us off. Joe Don Baker was great to work with, and so was the rest of the cast — Alan Vint, Tim Scott, Jennifer Billingsley, Billy "Green" Bush. Richard Compton is a wonderful director, and a great guy, too.

SC: Earlier, you mentioned a movie called MANIAC that you did with Compton and Jack Starrett, but you made another movie with Compton a few years later that was also called MANIAC.

Koslo: I think it was originally called MANIAC, but then they changed it to RANSOM [and also ASSAULT ON PARADISE]. Oliver Reed was in that. Now there's a guy for you! He would come to work on the first day knowing everybody's dialogue in the whole script! And for lunch, he would have — you know those big brandy glasses that are as big as fishbowls? They're ten inches tall, eight inches across? He would have one of those full of gin! (Laughing) He must have two hollow legs, 'cause he would drink all day and all night and be steady as a rock.

SC: That same year, you were also in TOMORROW NEVER COMES with him.

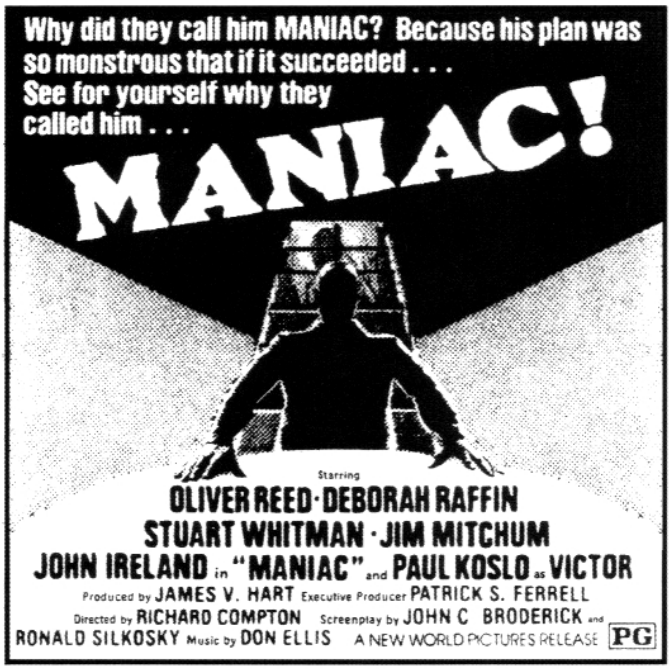
Koslo: That was the only movie I ever got fired from. Susan George and I were doing a scene on the river in Montreal. The camera was three hundred feet or so away, so we'd shoot the scene and they'd never yell cut. Susan was wearing nothing but a negligee, and it was cold out, like 30 degrees. She didn't have a robe — we couldn't hide a robe nearby, because of the way the shot was set up — and there was nobody to get one to her. Susan's a real professional. She worked like that for an hour, until she got so cold she started crying. And they still wouldn't get her a robe. They wouldn't even talk to us. I finally said, "Get her a goddamn robe NOW!" and the director, Peter Collinson — this hothead English guy — he fired me right on the spot. I called my agent immediately to protect myself. It was a frantic situation, because producers were talking and nobody knew what had happened. Luckily, I've been with the same agent for 26 years now, which is a movie in itself. Nobody stays with the same agent for more than 6 months around here. Anyway, I told him what happened, and he said, *"This is totally ludicrous."* He called the producers, and they rehired me the next day. The only thing that made that experience great was Oliver Reed.

SC: I've heard some great stories about Oliver Reed.

Koslo: Well, I could tell you a few more! (Laughing) I could spend hours talking about Oliver Reed. He would have dinner for us with wine, and each bottle of wine would cost anywhere from $600 to $1100 a bottle — and he'd have seven or eight bottles. All night long, with brandy and champagne and six people serving. He'd get up on the table, in front of everybody, and do every character from Winnie the Pooh. It was unbelievable. He tried to throw me out the window of the Ritz Hotel in Montreal, just as a prank! I grabbed hold of him and almost took him with me, but his valet — Sir Reggie, they called him — he saved both of us. Sir Reggie was built like a warthog, and he was the only guy strong enough to get us both back into the building. Just total craziness. When I'd go to England, I would visit [Reed]. He lives in a gigantic monastery he had refurbished with 60 bedrooms. The first thing he would do is give you a big sharp knife so you could carve your name or initials into the dining room table, which was like 50 feet long. He's an unbelievable guy. I've never known anybody who was such a character, and yet so professional on top of that. He's one-of-a-kind.

SC: JOE KIDD is one of those movies — like HEAVEN'S GATE and VOYAGE OF THE DAMNED — where I'm tempted to go right down the cast list and ask you about everybody who was in it!

Koslo: Well, working with Bobby Duvall was interesting. (Laughing) He can be a real hot pistol. We were shooting an interior scene at a warehouse in Tucson, and he'd been waiting all day to do this big scene. It was getting near the end of the day, and they started rushing him, and he just went into this incredible tirade, this monologue that went on for five minutes straight and ended with him shrieking *"you stupid FUCK!"* at the director [John Sturges]. But he has a great sense of humor, too. I remember one day, we were shooting up in Lone Pine, in central California, and it was cold and the wind was gusting like 60 to 80 miles an hour. I was with Bobby, Stroud the Cloud [Don Stroud], and James Wainwright, and the whole crew was there in front of us. We were all watching Clint do this shot, a nice easy shot riding through the sagebrush. The wind was blowing and blowing — and all of a sudden, Bobby let out this fart that was so loud, the whole crew heard it — and at the same time, the wind blew the hat off the guy in front of us! (Laughing) It looked like Bobby's fart blew the guy's brains out! Everybody saw what happened, everybody fell on the ground laughing — and of course the hat blew into the shot and ruined the shot. Clint looked over, like *"What the hell's that about?"*



SC: You had a good time working with Clint Eastwood?

Koslo: Oh yeah, Clint's a real class act. He has a great sense of humor also. The Cloud, Wainwright, and myself played the bad guys working for Duvall. Wainwright and the Cloud get killed off before I do, so I had another two or three weeks of work after they left. We were shooting in Tucson during the Super Bowl. I think Kansas City was playing, and I can't remember the other team. All of us bet against Clint, but the Cloud and Wainwright had to catch their plane before the end of the game. Clint was winning the bet big time, so they asked me to give him his money with a note. Clint and Bobby were at a table with Paul Newman — he was shooting JUDGE ROY BEAN at the time — Jacqueline Bisset, and some other people. They were all watching the game, and I walked in with the letter. I think there was $200 in it, and this note: *"Dear Clint. We can't beat you in this movie, and we can't beat you at the Super Bowl, so we just wanted to tell you to go fuck yourself."* (Laughing) And y'know what? Clint just started laughing!

SC: CLEOPATRA JONES is one of my favorite movies. What do you remember most about the making of that movie?

Koslo: Shelley Winters and I didn't get along too well because Jack [Starrett] kept putting me in the shots with her. (Laughing) She was always saying, *"What's he doing?"* — meaning me — and Jack finally said, "Shelley, goddammit, do what I'm asking you to do! Don't worry about him, worry about yourself!" So she was ticked at me. A few years later, I directed Sally Kirkland and Gary Sinise in Sam Shepard's *Curse of the Starving Class*, with James Gammon, who had originated the role in New York at the Public Theater about eight months earlier. Jimmy and I decided to do the West Coast premiere at the MET Theater. Sally was a protégé of Shelley's, so Shelley came out to see it, and she calmed down after she saw the show. Took her a few years, though.

SC: Was it your idea to speak with a British accent in CLEOPATRA JONES, or was that in the script?

Koslo: That was my idea, and I got the OK from Jack. The accent was another thing that got under Shelley's skin. The same thing happened to me with Faye Dunaway when we were making VOYAGE OF THE DAMNED. It's funny, but I've had a few run-ins with either directors or other actors because of my accents. You really have to stick up for what you believe in, without hurting anybody or pissing anyone off. German is my first language, so if Faye Dunaway doesn't like my accent... (Laughing) I'm sorry, but it's totally authentic! I played a German guy in HEAVEN'S GATE, but I made him Prussian so the accent would be different than the one I used in VOYAGE OF THE DAMNED. I try to be original and immerse myself in the part as much as I can, without getting idiotic about it. I had never done an Irish accent before, but I just did an episode of WALKER, TEXAS RANGER that was about the IRA, and they had a couple of real Irish guys on the show who were very complimentary about my Irish accent. I pride myself on doing a pretty good accent, no matter what it is.

SC: You played a bad guy in three Charles Bronson movies. Did you get along well with him?

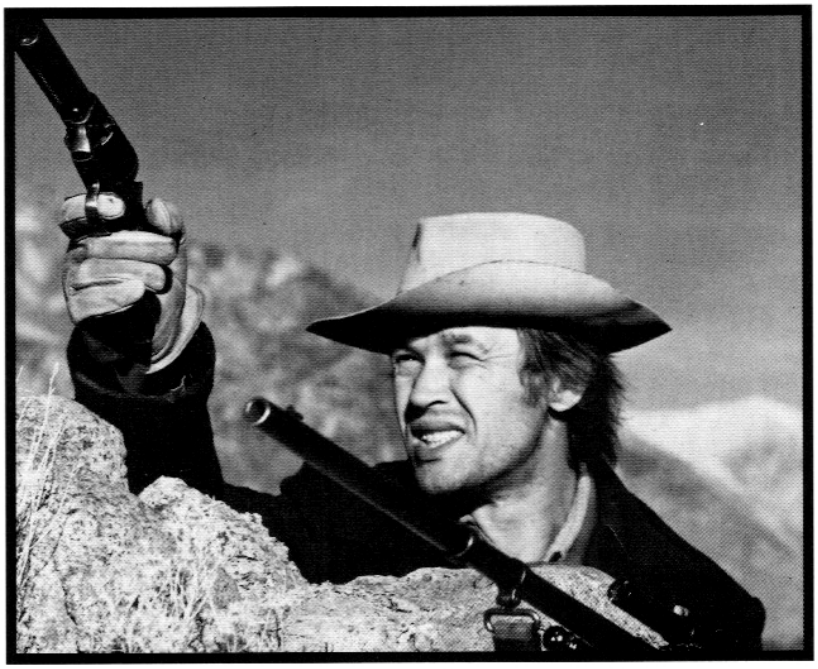
Koslo: We didn't get along at all on that first film, THE STONE KILLER. My first day on the set, I sat in his chair. The first joke I ever told him was "Hey, Charlie, did you hear the one about the Polish actor?" He said, *"No, what?"* I said, "Charles Buchinsky!" *"Do you think that's funny?!"* (Laughing) Being Polish myself, I thought it was hilarious, but it went over like a lead balloon with Charlie. He's *really* Polish, that guy! You wouldn't believe the things that have happened between me and Charlie Bronson. I could tell you stories all day long. When we were doing MR. MAJESTYK, he said, *"Next to me, you're the best thing in this movie."* Don't count on it, Charlie! But he apparently asked me back for the third movie, LOVE AND BULLETS. I saw him a few times after that — not by design, but by accident — and he was cordial.

SC: Both JOE KIDD and MR. MAJESTYK were written by Elmore Leonard. Did you ever encounter him on the sets of those movies?

Koslo: Y'know, I did, and he was very pleasant, but he was preoccupied with the story point stuff — like on MR. MAJESTYK, when Richard Fleischer [the director] changed the ending and let my character live because everyone was getting killed off. Even though we got to joke around, he was very odd and sort of an enigma. You couldn't really get close to the guy. But he was very pleasant, and he's certainly one hell of a writer.

SC: Any stories about Al Lettieri?

Koslo: That's another guy I can talk about all night long! (Laughing) Bill Smith, Oliver Reed, and Al Lettieri — their names just jump right out at me. I first met Al on the set of MR. MAJESTYK. A bunch of us were working in a field in Colorado, near this long, straight gravel road that looked like it stretched into infinity. We looked down this road and saw a cloud of dust coming, getting closer and closer. Finally, the dust settled and this super-stretch limo pulled up. Charlie was down the road apiece, in the opposite direction, away from the limo, and I was in between the limo and Charlie. We didn't know who it was. We had just finished lunch, and Al Lettieri had been expected for three or four days. He didn't have a firm starting date, because they were behind schedule on the film he was shooting in England. Anyway, the limo comes to a stop, the driver opens the back door, and out comes this rhinoceros of a guy with pitch black curly hair, moustache, and big doe eyes! He says, *"Uhhhh...where's the actors' dressing rooms?"* Someone said, "Over there." Right behind him comes these two 20 year-old chicks with short-shorts and bra halters! He said, *"Girls — go get those guys, make them feel at home,"* and then he looked around and he said, *"Hey, is that Charles Bronson over there?!"* He walked up to Charlie and grabbed his left hand — *"Hey Charlie! Al Lettieri!"* You remember MR. MAJESTYK, right? Charlie played a melon farmer? Well, Al put his right hand around Charlie's shoulder, squeezed him close and lifted him right off the ground, singing, *"Won't you be my melon, Charlieee babyyy!"* (Laughing) He carried Charlie like that right down the road, past the limo, for about a block and a half! Charlie was totally bewildered — and to to this day, nobody knows what they talked about. Al was a terrific guy.



Paul Koslo takes aim in JOE KIDD (1973)

SC: You really took a beating in FREEBIE AND THE BEAN.

Koslo: Yeah, I played Whitey. (Laughing) *"Get the pliers."* Remember that? When Jimmy Caan and Alan Arkin interrogate me, they did that little scene about the pliers. I didn't know what they were talking about, because they just threw that in there! What am I gonna say — "Hold it, guys, this isn't in the script?" Who am I to cut the scene? I just went along with it, and it really worked out well. Jimmy was setting the pliers, and my finger was in there already, so when he tried them out, he really squeezed my finger! (Laughing) I said "Owww!" and he was like *"Awww, did that hurt? Oh, well, awwww."* That was real. He didn't want to stop the scene either.

SC: That was basically the same part you played in THE LAUGHING POLICEMAN.

Koslo: Y'know what? I did those movies at the same time! They were both shot in San Francisco, and it just happened that the schedules worked out so I could do that. I'd be interrogated by Caan and Arkin, and then I'd go across town to be interrogated by Walter Matthau and Bruce Dern. (Laughing) I thought Matthau and Dern were putting on an act for me. It seemed like they hated each other. Walter had a phobia about cleanliness. He was spraying Lysol all over the room, and Dern couldn't stand the smell of the stuff. It was like watching the original ODD COUPLE, but with Walter playing the Jack Lemmon part.

SC: BOOTLEGGERS also came out the same year, and that was one of your few starring roles.

Koslo: Yeah, I cut my teeth on that film. That was the second thing I starred in, after CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, but it was my first leading role in an American production. It didn't get any better than that for me, y'know? (Laughing) I think I took myself a little too seriously in that film. Movies like that could make or break a guy early on, and even though it never made me and certainly didn't break me, I think I was a little too serious about the character. I was so deep in the forest, I couldn't see the trees. It worked, though, and I got some good reviews, but I think it could've been a better movie. It was Jaclyn Smith's first movie, and I got to work with Slim Pickens. This is how it was with Slim — *"Boys, I want you to meet my daughter, Easy Pickens! Easy, these are the boys!"* (Laughing) The director, Charles B. Pierce, also did THE LEGEND OF BOGGY CREEK, and that put him on the map. He ended up screwing me for my participation on BOOTLEGGERS. I had a real good deal on deferment, which was the new thing in the early '70s. That movie cost $300,000 and it made over $16 million. I had 2% of the gross, and I never saw any of it. That was heartbreaking. It wasn't a blockbuster, but it made a lot of money and it played for a long time. But that's show biz. You take your chances when you get up in the morning and do what you gotta do.

SC: I'm surprised we've gotten this far without mentioning John Wayne, since you played one of the bad guys in ROOSTER COGBURN.

Koslo: He was a great guy. Very supportive. I had always enjoyed his work, and wanted to meet him — and when I finally did, he surpassed my expectations, which was a pleasant surprise. I learned so much from watching him act with Katherine Hepburn. Acting seemed as easy for them as opening the water tap. The first time I met him was on the set, and the director [Stuart Millar] introduced us. It was the thrill of my life to meet him. He asked me, *"What part are you playin', kid?"* My character's name was Luke, so I said, "I'm playing Luke — Luke the Duke." He said, *"No, you're Luke the Puke! There's only one Duke around here, and don't you ever forget it!"* (Laughing) I was one of the few actors around who knew how to ride a horse really well, because I was living on a ranch and breeding Appaloosa horses. Wayne's kids were there, and I made a point of telling them that I could ride really well. That night, after the first day and that introduction, he came up to me in the hotel dining room and said, *"Anybody my kids like can't be all bad. Put it there, kid!"* And he shook my hand. I never realized he was so damn big. (Laughing) That guy was big. I'm 6'2", but I felt like a dwarf next to that guy.

SC: The following year, you played another bad guy in THE DROWNING POOL.

Koslo: On my first day of work, I was on one of those hydroplanes riding around the swamp. There was a pilot running it, and a little seat behind him that two people could just barely fit on. Paul Newman was sitting down, and I was supposed to be sitting next to him, but he kept trying to push me off the seat! I really didn't know the guy, so it threw me off guard. "Is he fuckin' with me? Is he trying to be funny?" I didn't know how to react, and it went on like that all day. The next morning we were back in the same location, but instead of letting me sit down, he said, *"Let me just stay on the seat, and you stay right THERE"* — and he tried to push me into the swamp! Well, I grabbed his arm and held it so tight, there was no way I was gonna go in alone! We almost went in, but at the last minute he grabbed the seat that we had been reluctantly sharing the day before and he saved us both. From then on, I could do no wrong. (Laughing) He'd send a limo for me, he'd let me use his portable phone, he'd give me six-packs of those little cans of Coors. He had to test me first, y'know?

SC: At what point during the making of HEAVEN'S GATE did you realize it was going to be a disaster?

Koslo: When it took three weeks to shoot one-eighth of a page of script, and it was only one shot! I played the mayor of the town, and I had to be there for the whole shoot — which was supposed to last 11 weeks, I think, but I wound up working 6-1/2 months on principal photography! I think [director] Michael Cimino just got carried away by self-indulgence and the headiness of winning the Oscar for THE DEER HUNTER just a couple of months prior. Kris Kristofferson and I had a scene together where I go into his room with some of the town merchants to wake him up, and he's in a drunken stupor. He pulls a whip out from under his pillow and cracks it at us, and we all retreat to the doorway. That's it. That's the whole scene. We had to do it 58 times with seven cameras running — and then Cimino said to me, *"Well, y'know, we're never gonna get it perfect."* (Laughing) That's when I knew we were all fucked.

SC: Do you prefer working on the big studio pictures, or the smaller independent films?
Koslo: For me, it's more important if everyone involved works together and gets along like a family unit. On big experiences like HEAVEN'S GATE and VOYAGE OF THE DAMNED — big pictures that became legends, even though they didn't do well — I got along well with some of the greatest people in the movies, like Orson Welles, and I'll always cherish that. The Duke gave me a coffee mug with a 24-karat gold rim that says *"To Paul, from the Duke. ROOSTER COGBURN."* It's the little things you'll never forget. I'm proud of some of the work I did on television, like ROOTS: THE NEXT GENERATION and CONAGHER. THE LOSERS was a small picture, and that was a great experience, but some of the bigger movies didn't feel right. LOOSE CANNONS was like that. A fairly large budget, big actors, but it just didn't feel like a family unit. Gene Hackman is a wonderful guy, though. He's very easygoing and loose, very complimentary, and he sticks up for you. I didn't get along with Bob Clark, the director, and Hackman got behind me on that. It isn't often that you see guys take time out from their own world and their own career to stick up for another actor — but he did that for me. Little things like that can make a bad experience great.

SC: Looking over your filmography, one can see that you've worked more than once with a number of directors. You obviously had good working relationships with them.
Koslo: Sure, guys like Starrett, Sarafian, Compton — I did four movies with Stuart Rosenberg. It's very rare that I don't get along with a director.

SC: Did you enjoy working with Stuart Gordon on ROBOT JOX?
Koslo: He's an incredible director, and a strong theatre person, too. He cowrote *Bleacher Bums* [with Joe Mantegna], which is one of the classics of the whole Chicago theatre scene. He's really low-key, but a very funny man. Again, very supportive of his actors and the whole process. He's more along the lines of the European side of moviemaking — y'know, where it's more of an art form, and the actors and the crew are treated like human beings? (Laughing) It was originally supposed to be called ROBOJOX. Albert and Charles Band had the old Dino De Laurentiis studios in Rome, and this was their biggest movie up to that point — but they didn't have enough money to do all of the effects, so it took them a couple of years to finish it. In the meantime, ROBOCOP came out, and I guess they registered the "robo" part of the title, because when ROBOJOX finally came out, it had to be changed to ROBOT JOX. (Laughing) They did really well with that picture, though. I think every kid in the universe at that time saw it.

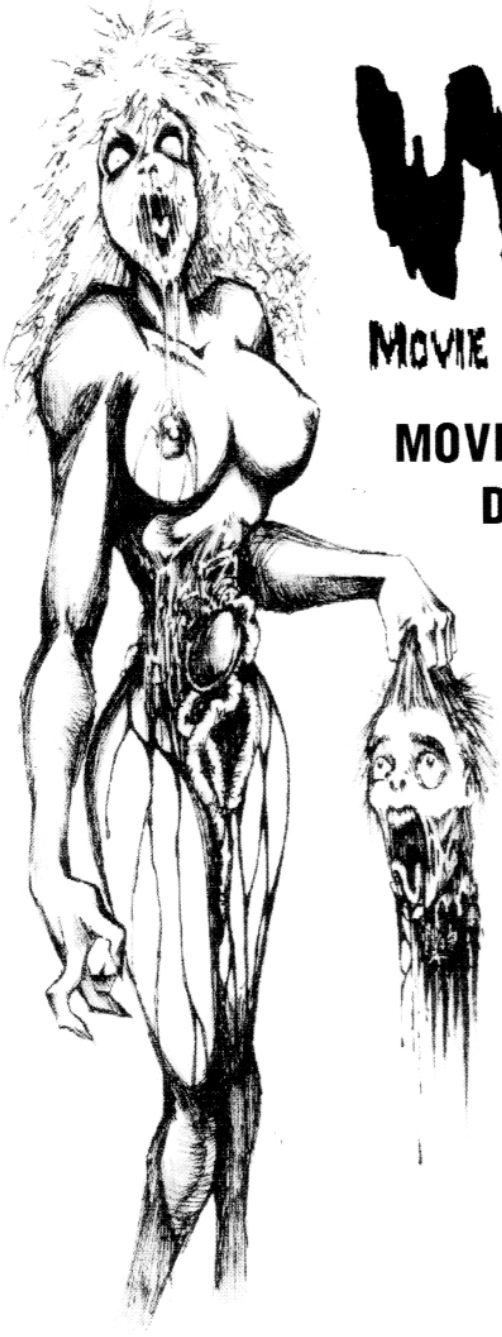
SC: In A NIGHT IN THE LIFE OF JIMMY REARDON, you acted opposite the late River Phoenix. Did the troubled young star make an impression on you?
Koslo: He was a really nice kid. From what I could tell, he was very strong, and he seemed sure of himself — almost to the point of being a little cocky, maybe? But that's understandable. He was a kid, and he had the world by the tail. He certainly had a lot of talent, and he had a great look. That kid had it all. What a waste.

SC: Being a fan of THE LOSERS, I was thrilled when it showed up on Bruce Willis' television in PULP FICTION.
Koslo: Quentin Tarantino called me at home and asked me to audition for that. At the time, I didn't even know who he was. It turns out he's a fan of mine, and he really likes THE LOSERS. I auditioned for him, but wasn't cast. As a tribute and a nice gesture, though, he put in some footage from THE LOSERS, and as a result, I receive residuals for that. I hope to work with him on another project sometime.

SC: What's your next project?
Koslo: I'm working now on a very interesting film, as a producer and as an actor, called GHOST DANCING, by David Chisholm. I'm also in the new Jean-Claude Van Damme movie, INFERNO, which is sort of a cross between HIGH PLAINS DRIFTER and FARGO. From what I hear, everybody is really pleased with it. There was an industry screening of the rough cut not long ago, and people were impressed with Van Damme's acting. (Laughing) He's added a second dimension, apparently.

SC: Does it bother you that you're mostly known for character roles?
Koslo: Not really. In fact, during a syndicated college radio interview — I think when I was doing THE LOLLY MADONNA WAR — somebody asked me if my goal was to be a big star, and I said, "Only if I can be the biggest star that ever lived." It hurts too much. To hurt that much, you may as well become the biggest — and who can guarantee you that? I said that 25 years ago, and I still feel that way. It's lonely at the top — well, it's lonely at the bottom, too! (Laughing) But to be at the top, you have to have some kind of compensation, and I'm sure that's why some of these guys are getting $25 million a picture. The celluloid sucks out your soul. Hollywood makes you forget about everybody but yourself, and that's pretty shitty. Movies shouldn't be the most important thing in a person's life, but to an actor, they're very important. I take my work very seriously, and I'm fortunate to have been blessed with this career. Ω

FROM ALIENS TO ZOMBIES



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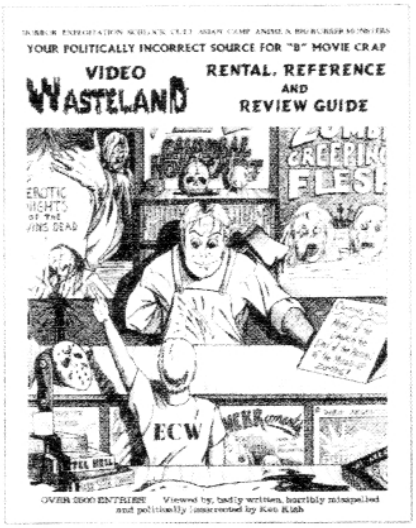

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FILM REVIEWS

COMING APART (1969).

This is one of those movies which I'd read about for years, but never had the opportunity to see for myself. Luckily, I caught a rare screening (one of its first in 30 years) at MOMA, and came face-first with an altogether unique drama, that meshes the acting style of Cassavetes within a Warhol framework, and locates the best of both worlds. A psychological demolition derby, with enough sexuality to earn it an X-rating during its 1969 release, this is the type of movie which simply could *not* be made nowadays.

Rip Torn stars as Dr. Joe Glazer, a psychiatrist who's coming apart during an emotional breakdown. Leaving his wife and setting up a bachelor pad apartment, he installs a hidden camera (which he tells others is a "kinetic" piece of artwork), and this lens becomes the POV of his on-screen self-destruction. Throughout, various female visitors indulge Glazer's sexual fantasies. A young blonde neighbor (Lynn Swann) shows up with her baby, strips, gyrates to his stereo, then asks for fifty-bucks when he begins to get serious. Lois Markle plays a lover who shows off the cigarette burns on her chest, then dresses up in lingerie and stilettos; a teen McCarthy campaign worker comes to his door; and Viveca Lindfors tries to pull him from this abyss-driven lifestyle. It culminates in a party that, once everyone's stoned, devolves into an impromptu orgy.

Torn again proves that he's not only one of our finest actors, but daring enough to attempt this type of career-crippling material. Above all, co-star Sally Kirkland is a revelation. Playing a girlfriend/patient who cracks under the pressure, she strips down, performs felatio on Torn (the back of her bobbing head is glimpsed, but nothing extreme is seen) and masturbates while riding his bare leg. It's a complex, tormented portrait, which is in turn sexy, violent and heartbreaking. Despite the film's voyeuristic pretensions, this is so intensely acted that it commands our attention, even during the longest, artiest digressions. By its crushing finale, the filmmaking itself becomes as fragmented as Glazer's disintegrated world. Sounds serious? It is, but that doesn't detract from its moments of humor, often provoked by Torn's reaction-shot into his secret lens, plus a particularly bizarre story about a live duck in a dresser drawer and a guy's penis.

All the while, everything we observe is filtered through this hidden camera, and though occasionally turned (so we can glimpse the Manhattan skyline out his window), most of the movie is one static, b&w glimpse of his much-used couch—while scenes break off in mid-sentence when the camera runs out of film, and time becomes irrelevant, since it could be hours or even weeks between one scene to another. All of the music is ambient, and mostly Jefferson Airplane (including the extremely appropriate "Someone to Love"). A financial and critical disaster, director Milton Moses Ginsberg's only other feature was 1973's THE WEREWOLF OF WASHINGTON.

CAN DIALECTICS BREAK BRICKS? [La Dialectique Peut-Elle Casser Des Briques] (Shocking Videos; 1973).

I can almost guarantee that this fucked-up movie is the strangest entry in the entire issue. Beginning with a seemingly substandard Hong Kong martial arts flick entitled CRUSH (a/k/a TANG SHOU TAI QUAN DAO, starring Pai Piao), it was brilliantly redubbed and reshaped into an entirely new concoction. But unlike the low-brow cheap laughs of similar projects, like WHAT'S UP, TIGER LILY?, Rene Vienet transforms this movie into an inspired, post-modern, class-struggle masterpiece. Once just a simple kung fu film, it's now a French-language political polemic; a self-described "toast to the exploited: for the extermination of the exploiters." Think of this tape (which is widescreen, with subtitles) as a Mensa-level MST3K that's both fascinating in its intentions and impossibly absurd.

Set in a martial arts school (which now studies dialectic materialism), we meet our working class "proletarian." And as villainous "bureaucrats" repress and exploit the people in order to force everyone into repressive jobs and "drink their sweat," Vienet takes a once-simple tale of good vs. evil, and injects it with hilariously pretentious, post-Marxist subtext. So instead of a final battle in the name of good ol' revenge, now it's for a "a classless society," and urges us to not only toss off our shackles, but smash every church and hang every landlord.

See! Trained martial artists arguing about Lenin and Trotsky! Hear! Characters discussing State capitalism, class alienation, Bakunin, Castro, and Reich's "Function of the Orgasm"—even as they're all kicking the shit out of each other! Throughout, characters blithely comment on the insipid nature of their own character, and it even has the balls to happily boast that the original filmmakers have no idea what they've done to their movie. As original as all of it is, 82 straight minutes is a bit difficult to endure in one chunk; once you get the idea, and it's sledgehammered home, there's only more of the same. No question, a brilliantly one-of-a-kind slice of subversive cinema, too intelligent for its own good and too mind-boggling to be ignored.

STOP CALLING ME BABY! [Moi, Fleur Bleue] (VSoM; 1977).

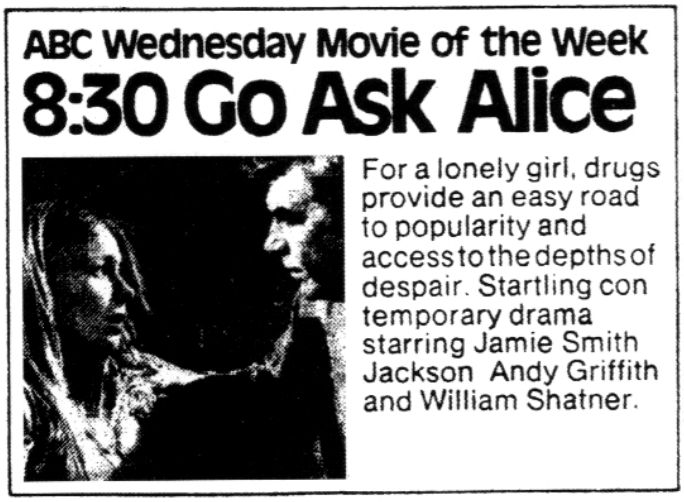
If you weren't already aware, I love to stumble across some current superstar in one of their early, on-screen embarrassments. This French jailbait drama is a prime candidate—a little-known dollop of EuroTrash top-billed by a 15-year-old Jodie Foster. Filmed in both French and English (this print is the later), its only amusement comes from Foster's role as a schoolgirl named Isabelle (nicknamed Rosebud), who yearns to have an experienced man pop her cherry. Obviously, this gig doesn't go high on her resume nowadays.

Living with older sis, Sophie (Sydne Rome), is no help either, since this fashion model loves to screw and has half-naked posters of herself throughout the apartment. But their life gets weird when a truck driver named Max (Jean Yanne) becomes so obsessed with Sophie that he hires a detective to track her down, with this blue-collar buffoon then trying to prove he's worthy of her desires. Of course, since this is a French film, the lovely model instantly drops into bed with this creep. This only makes Isabelle both resentful and flirtatious to Max, particularly after he moves in with the sisters.

Director Eric Le Hung continues on a serious route, with Isabelle seducing Max's (much-older) detective, ending with a chaste morning-after in bed (and the covers conveniently pulled up to Isabelle's neck). But the shit really hits the fan when Isabelle idiotically recounts her sexual scenario in front of her entire classroom.

Dull, oddly-romantic, and only fitfully sleazy, this mediocre coming-of-age yawn would be long-forgotten if not for Foster. It's definitely her show, as she manipulates every situation and dreams of someday

becoming a great lover, known around the globe. While Foster avoids any embarrassing sexual moments (she's felt up, but it's over her shirt), she's less fortunate in the music department, since she actually sings portions of the grating, oft-repeated tune "When I Looked At Your Face." One final note: In light of today's sexual Puritanism, it's enlightening to watch how nonchalantly the film embraces this consummated relationship between an adult guy and a 15-year-old girl. If made in the US today, it'd never see the light of day.



GO ASK ALICE (Video Vortex; 1973).

It's been 25 years since I first saw this infamous, anti-drug TV-movie, which, at the time, was reportedly based on the diary of a 15-year-old named Alice, who went from innocent high schooler to teen junkie (more recently, the book was exposed as a fake). A precursor of the AfterSchool Special, this sappy melodrama piles on every imaginable drug cliché; and you can tell just how effective the movie is, since I watched it as an impressionable kid, but still blissfully indulged in a booze 'n' drug-drenched adulthood.

Kicking off with a mediocre cover of "White Rabbit", Alice (a decidedly unteenaged Jamie Smith Jackson) moves to a new town, buys a diary ("a place to be me"), and hopes to fit in. Soon, thanks to peer pressure and her lack of self-worth, misguided Alice thinks that the only way to be "super-cool" is to be super-stoned. No surprise, at her first party, Alice gets dosed with LSD and soon makes mind-altering a regular event. Meanwhile, her disconnected parents (including William Shatner as her dad, complete with a fake mustache and glasses, to match his toupee) never notice their kid is popping pills, doing lines, screwing, and dropping acid. Better still, her new friends are so patently evil that they push drugs at the local junior high!

Soon, Alice's life is spiraling straight into the toilet. She's sleeping in the park, has blackouts, freak-outs, vague memories of strange sex acts, and even when she tries to go straight, her acid flashback in the middle of a babysitting gig deposits her in a hospital ward. In the end, Alice might realize the error of her ways, but from what I could tell, this chick was so naturally vapid that drugs could only *improve* her personality.

Heavy for its time, this combination of PSYCH-OUT and THE BRADY BUNCH (or: "Marcia Brady, Junkie"), is a fondly-remembered classic in suburbia-to-suicide drug films. Director John Korty (THE EWOK ADVENTURE) lays on the bummer plot twists with a backhoe, while Special Guest Star Andy Griffith turns up as an unconventional priest who warns the runaway Alice of possible "brain damage." Also, look for brief appearances from future AMERICAN GRAFFITI stars MacKenzie Phillips (as a 14-year-old doper) and Charlie Martin Smith (playing a student in search of drugs), plus Robert Carradine as a long-haired stoner. All in all, a fitfully amusing time capsule, with the amount you ingested while watching it, in direct proportion to its number of unintentional laughs.

MUSHROOMS (VSoM; 1994).

It's a shame that this excellent Australian feature never made it to the US, because writer-director Alan Madden has concocted a delightful black comedy. Often reminding me of a '90s variation on such classic Ealing outings as THE LADYKILLERS, it's filled with engaging and eccentric characters, who aren't afraid to turn a blind eye to good taste *or* the law.

In begins when a wanted criminal named Grubb (Boris Brkic) invades the home of a pair of elderly sisters/widows, who happen to have an extra bedroom to rent. These ol' gals, Minnie (Lynette Curran) and Flo (Julia Blake), aren't the most straight-arrow pair though—Flo shoplifts, Minnie is terrified to leave her house (her POV erupting into distorted reality the moment she opens the front door), and their flat is overflowing with 'hot' merchandise leftover from their husbands' old 'pawn shop' business.

When the police go door-to-door, Sergeant Instep (Simon Chilvers) impulsively rents out their available room, even as Grubb is hiding upstairs. Now *this* is a predicament; and it only gets better when a gas leak kills this crook and has the sisters trying to dispose of the body, under the nose of their new boarder. Let's just say that these ladies certainly show off their bloodthirsty potential when it comes to destroying a corpse, plus there's a lovable cannibalism subplot, performed with admirable style and a straight face. The complications just get thicker and sicker when Minnie takes up with the oblivious Instep, and the backyard chickens aid in eating the remains (with the preponderance of chicken shit used to grow the title mushrooms).

The pace might be a bit low-key for some, but I relished the film's casual deviance. At the center of it all, Minnie and Flo make a fabulous duo, who quibble incessantly, have their fair share of family secrets, and enjoy slugging back straight whiskey by the tumbler. Expertly lensed and charmingly acted, this is a blissful, immoral yarn that never ignores its rich characters in favor of cheap laughs.

LAS ADOLESCENTES [The Adolescents] (Video Vortex; 1976).

It's Sexy Schoolgirls In Trouble Time! And though director Pedro Maso offers little new to the genre, his camera-friendly cast keeps it watchable (despite the lack of subtitles). Most important, this Spanish production is an early showcase for the comely Koo Stark (EMILY), who became an item in the British tabloids in 1982 when this sexploitation starlet dated Prince Andrew.

Stark plays a pretty (but uptight—hence her eyeglasses) young lass named Ana, who attends a British girls' school which, from the look of it, specializes in European nymphets. Alas, things aren't going well for Ana, since she's often the brunt of pranks (e.g. her clothes are stolen from her gym locker), but that's nothing compared to the trouble that can happen in the outside world, when Ana and two gal-pals take a trip into swingin' London. Hitting the streets in their schoolgirl attire and ready for fun, the viewer is also ready, since so far, the film has been all tease and little actual sleaze.

At a disco, her friends pick up a few city studs (who dress like colorblind pimps), but once the partying begins, only Ana is a hold-out to their sweet, sweet lovin'. Instead, Ana falls for the Nice Guy in the group (Jack Taylor), who politely courts Miss Virginity, and once romance is in the air, pops her cherry. Little does she know, her romeo has a hidden camera in his bedroom, ready to turn Ana's freshman fuck into a public event. Suddenly, an array of erotic photos turn up as the cover pictorial in 'Estimulation' magazine.

Co-starring Susan Player and Victoria Vera, while the movie does offer a fair amount of bared flesh, its emphasis on melodramatic plot twists (including a budding romance between love-sick Stark and now-remorseful Taylor) only slows down the more tawdry fun. Yet despite some last-minute moralizing, Maso pulls together a cheesy, action-laced finale. Best of all, waifish Koo has the proper lolita-esque looks for this sort of outing. Sure, her acting sucks, but then again, how much talent does it take to be beaten and raped by a black guy, as an enthusiastic shutterbug takes pictures?

CONFESSIONS OF A TEENAGE PEANUT BUTTER FREAK (1976).

Ever in search of porno-oddities from the '70s, this hardcore feature is a candidate for the Most Bizarre Fetish Award. Rex Roman stars as Billy, a nice guy who's nervous around girls, and has only one obsession in life: A fondness for sweet, creamy peanut butter. When he meets a nice gal (with her own supply of organic peanut butter), Billy finally opens up about his past.

It began with a teenage trauma, when Billy was caught masturbating by his aunt, with his load spattering her face and a peanut butter sandwich landing on his dick. Then Auntie Opal warns him that jerking-off will turn him into a "blind, stinking, mental and physical cripple," only to help him overcome his girl-phobia by putting peanut butter on her

own clit and letting him go down on her. From that moment on, the poor boy is hooked. Flashbacks continue, as young Billy stumbles onto various sexual encounters, including a voyeuristic lesbian tryst (Billy blatantly squats behind a dresser, yet is never seen) which leads to him being handcuffed and anally probed. In addition, John C. Holmes turns up as a long-donged pal, who gets him a date with a horny chess champ (only to fuck her himself). With his pork-chop sideburns and Bud Cort-charisma, the stuttering Billy is afraid no woman will ever want him (and considering his limp flashbacks, it's no wonder!), but this new gal does.

Ultimately, this becomes a ridiculous psychological profile of an abused guy, who conquers his obsession by meeting a woman (Jennifer Mason, a.k.a. Helen Madigan) who isn't adverse to bringing a jar of peanut butter into the bedroom. In terms of technical finesse, this sucks. And as far as eroticism goes, there's something perversely fascinating about screwing-scenes that are so blasé they can only make you feel better about your own sex life. Absurdly anti-erotic, this is an amateurish sexual artifact from an era that's so long extinct, it's the pornographic equivalent of QUEST FOR FIRE.

CRACKING UP (1977).

This seemingly-forgotten comedy had its world premiere in Champaign, Illinois, with a reported seven customers per screening. I'm not surprised. But two decades later, this hit-and-mostly-miss feature is awash with recognizable faces, in some of their earliest gigs. Misguided from its first moments, this strives to be a GROOVE TUBE-styled success, but is such a ragged concoction that only isolated moments make the grade.

When a massive earthquake sends California sliding into the ocean, cities are gutted and dead bodies litter the landscape—so bring on the laughs! The Firesign Theatre's Phil Proctor and Peter Bergman (infinitely funnier in J-MEN FOREVER) play newscasters Walter Concrete and Barbara Halters, who cover the chaos and provide a framework for leaden comedy sketches and commercial parodies which have little to do with the quake. One amusing exception is the Pasadena Rose Bowl Parade, which now consists of injured, moaning survivors, dragged along by nurses. Fred Willard (along with his Ace Trucking Company pals) turns up in a tasteless bit about a job interview conducted by the handicapped and plays a posh maitre d' at a roadside diner. Other skits include Edie McClurg and pre-AIRPLANE flamer Steve Stucker.

The best moments are courtesy of Credibility Gap members Harry Shearer, Michael McKean and David L. Lander. A (pre-Squiggy) Lander hosts a Polish talk-show, with a hair-netted (pre-Lenny) McKean as his barely sentient guest—an Irish-Pole (who's both stupid *and* drunk). Later, Lander and Shearer play a reporter and a concert promoter, doing a hilarious send-up of "Who's on first?" (substituting the bands The Who, The Guess Who, and Yes). Finally, McKean and Shearer take up pre-SPINAL TAP instruments, with Lander on vocals during the Illegal Alien Variety Hour.

The segues between the skits play like a post-apocalyptic version of LAUGH-IN, while The Tubes' Fee Waybill plays a scientist who surveys the damage and contributes soundtrack tunes like "White Punks on Dope." Directed by Rowby Goren and Chuck Staley (I know...Who?), this is a severely mixed bag, pocked with gratuitous nudity and drug humor, in order to garner an R-rating. Oddly enough, CRACKING UP most closely resembles present-day SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE shows, by never knowing when to put a limp skit to rest. Even at only 69 minutes, this celluloid crapshoot needs a good trimming.

GIRL OF THE NIGHT (1960).

Hoping to sidestep its sleazier trappings by claiming to be based on a "psychoanalytical study" entitled *The Call Girl* by Dr. Harold Greenwald, this lurid b&w expose is equipped with an array of name-brand enticements. First and foremost, our NYC lady of the night is played by Honey West herself, Anne Francis. It's also directed by Joseph Cates (WHO KILLED TEDDY BEAR?), with imaginative editing by the late great Aram Avakian (END OF THE ROAD).

This expose plunges us into the tawdry life of Bobbie Williams (Francis). First glimpsed running for her life, it's just a typical day for a 'girl of the night,' as she's beaten black-and-blue by a sadistic client. To top it off, her pimp (John Kerr) is seeing *another* two-bit slut! Still, Bobbie continually forgives this manipulative, drunken jerk, since he promises to marry her. Before long, Bobbie and her beauty mark are approaching basketcase levels.

Enter Lloyd Nolan playing a kindly psychologist neighbor, who lets Bobbie vent her problems and detail her road to prostitution—a broken home, meeting the wrong guy, a New Jersey upbringing (hell, *any* of those factors could drive someone to this miserable fate). In response, the eternally optimistic Doctor informs Bobbie that 3 out of 4 call girls commit suicide. When Bobbie tries to quit The Life, she suddenly realizes that 9-to-5 jobs are demeaning (unlike her former occupation as a semen receptacle), and when she *tries* to date a nice guy (James Broderick, from TV's FAMILY), Bobbie is so emotionally damaged that she goes nuts when he simply tries to kiss her.

The story follows the usual downfall-of-a-whore route, but considering its time period, was ahead of the pack and relatively risqué. Unfortunately, all of Nolan's scenes are pure schmaltz, particularly when he chalks her problem up to that Hollywood stand-by, a shocking childhood trauma. Francis, who was 28 at the time (but looks like she's pushing 40, thanks to her drag-queen-thick make-up), does an admirable job; Kerr aptly plays a walking, talking sack-of-shit; Nolan is an insufferable do-gooder; while Arthur Storch is a businessman who blows a gasket when he learns his date is a pro. Despite its uplifting edge, this noir-glimpse into the Wonderful World of Whores gets points for attempting a hard-hitting character study, instead of the usual sexploitation.

FORTY DEUCE (Shocking Videos; 1982).

Anyone mourning the demise of grimy 42nd Street will want to check out this ragged slice-of-lowlife, directed by Warhol-survivor Paul Morrissey (TRASH, WOMEN IN REVOLT). Based on the Off-Off-Broadway play by Alan Bowne, it embraces the world of teenage male hustlers, who work the streets off Times Square with offers of "coke, speed, cock." And while extremely talky, Morrissey expertly captures NYC just as I first learned to love it—pocked with seedy porno theatres, graffitied subway cars and shithole apartments.

A pre-DINER, 23-year-old Kevin Bacon recreates his Obie-winning role of Rickey, a greasy-haired, burnt-out, dealer/junkie who enjoys passing out in the Port Authority Mens' Room. When he's not nodding off, his mouth doesn't stop, with some of the raunchiest, racist dialogue imaginable. (It makes you wish Bacon had reprised this character in FOOTLOOSE. Now *that* would've been a movie!) Aided by slow-witted pals Crank (Tommy Citera), Blow (Mark Keyloun) and Mitchell (Esai Morales), and with Augie the pimp (Harris Laskawy) keeping his kids in line, the script is fueled with hilarious, but surprisingly real moments—such as when one whiz-kid tries to take a simple subway ride from 42nd Street to a Chelsea clinic, only to get his crab-infested ass lost.

Events turn heavy when a dead, naked 12-year-old runaway turns up in Augie's bed, with Rickey coming up with an idiotic plan to make a buck, by convincing a wealthy john that *he* accidentally killed the kid. Although top-billed, Orson Bean only appears in the second half (which inexplicably switches to split-screen!) as Mr. Roper, a well-to-do homo-pedophile. Rickey tries to convince Roper to buttfuck this 'sleepy runaway', but first gets him so stoned that he doesn't realize the boy is dead. Eventually, Roper freaks out and ends up hiding under the bed; and it's terrific to see '70s game-show-regular Bean going off the deep end.

The performers, who all look the part, are a mixed bag (almost as if Morrissey hired 'em straight off the street). Meanwhile, the combined IQ of Augie & his boys equals that of a White Castle grill chef; and unbelievably, these characters are even *less* redeeming than those in Morrissey's Warhol flicks. Containing too many digressions and dull patches to be a great film, it still sports several solid performances, colorful monologues, a believable stench of the city, and some gutsy experimental moves (particularly that lovably gratuitous, split-screen second act).

A THIEF IN THE NIGHT (1972), A DISTANT THUNDER (1978) and **IMAGE OF THE BEAST (1981).**

A Fundamentalist epic of the Apocalypse, the Anti-Christ, and the Rapture, this Iowa-lensed trio of films is a true revelation—a revelation of just how misguided religious propaganda can get, that is. Directed by Donald W. Thompson, these classic Mark IV Productions were filmed over a ten year period, and since many of the actors appear in the same roles throughout the series, we actually get to watch them age on-camera.

Wasting no time, THIEF kicks off with the vanishing of millions, and Patty (Patty Dunning) grieving over the disappearance of husband Jim. Then, in an extended flashback, we meet three teen girls, after a gospel meeting, with Jenny (Coleen Niday) instantly kowtowing to Jesus; while friends Patty and Diane (Maryann Rachford) prefer to hang out with hunky guys. Meanwhile, a teen preacher turns every party into an instant bummer, by spouting about the end of the world (complete with the Beast's Mark: "a super evil credit card...on your hand or forehead").

The dull drama escalates when Patty's boyfriend Jim is bitten by a cobra, with last-minute life-saving turning him into a Christian. Soon, the two are wed (cut to a 'happily married' montage of them playing checkers and fixing a TV dinner), but Patty still won't give herself over to Christ. So when The Rapture suddenly whisks all Believers to Heaven, Patty is alone, as a world government comes into power and begins an I.D. program on the *back of one's hand!* It gets even schlockier when rebellious Patty is chased by the all-powerful forces of Evil (a van and a helicopter) and turned in by friend Diane—only to awaken to a "Was it only a dream? Or only the beginning?" twist.

Executive producer Russel S. Doughton Jr. also co-stars as a preacher who never taught about the Rapture, and is now stuck on Earth. Desperately hoping to appeal to teenaged skeptics, everyone wears PARTRIDGE FAMILY hand-me-downs, while the entire endeavor has the unmistakable stench of white-trash drive-in slop.

Five years later, Patty's plight continued in A DISTANT THUNDER. Stuck in an internment camp for government enemies, Patty (still played by Dunning) doesn't have time for Jesus, since she's more concerned about her upcoming execution on a bloody guillotine. In yet another flashback, we see how Patty reacted to The Rapture, discovered that all of her Holier-than-her friends were gone (which includes a flashback-*within*-a-flashback of Heaven-bound Jenny), and was captured. Sure, the previous film was just a nightmare, but now it's all coming true.

With one world government in place, a Mark (of the Beast?) is implemented, and without it, children die from a lack of medicine, people starve, and viewers suffer from terminal propaganda. Despite past warnings from her gray-haired granny (who lectured about the horrors of Judgment Day as she made gingerbread men), Patty remains an unbeliever, joins up with neighbors Wendy (Sally Johnson) and kid-sister Sandy (Sandy Stevens), and the three hide out in the country. As more Biblical prophecies come true (food and gas shortages), the gals are soon on the run after being betrayed (again!) by Diane & her boyfriend Jerry. So much for originality.

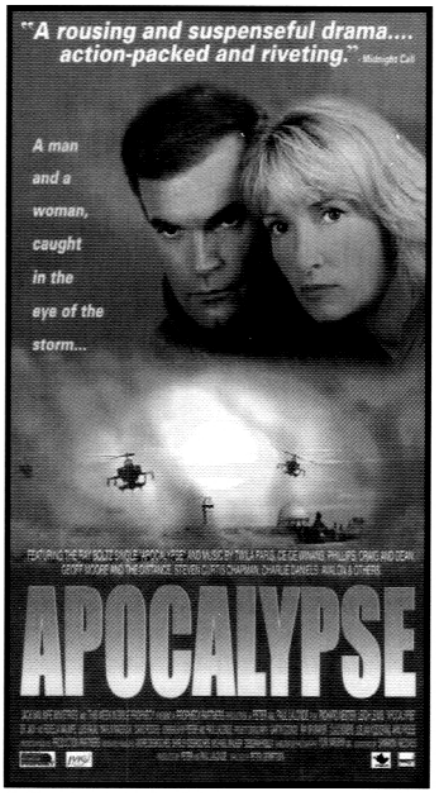
Essentially, this is the same scenario as THIEF (including many of the same locations), but with slightly more impressive production values. Throughout, we're educated in the various stages of the Apocalypse, Doughton returns to preach about "godless humanism," and Patty continues to prove she's a nitwit, who doesn't deserve the joys of Heaven, much less a lead role in a movie.

IMAGE OF THE BEAST begins with the Mark firmly entrenched in society, and the opening credits filled with low-tech computers. (I can almost hear the in-bred churchgoers murmuring, "Dem things are evil.") But wait! How did Patty survive her impending execution in the previous movie? Thanks to the begging of young Sandy (now, substantially more adult), the skies turn black, the earth cracks open, and God spares her life. That's pretty fuckin' convenient.

With the planet under military control, a whole new pack of non-actors (more earnest, but less talented than ever) turn up in this installment. When a few females run from the authorities, a military hunk (William Wellman Jr.) aids them in their escape, and even helps create a counterfeit Mark, to hide from the demonic government. Doughton returns, this time in bearded-Survivalist-mode, as a "babbling preacher" who lives in the woods and forces the fleeing folks to listen to his ravings about the fake Messiah (labeling computers the "new golden calf"). In addition, the continually back-stabbing Diane & Jerry make an appearance, looking older but no wiser.

As the plot gets murkier, the righteous hide out in a hilariously fake, two-bit cave, even as murdered prophets rise from the dead and the military displays all of the efficiency of Col. Klink and Schultz. Unfortunately, there's more talk than action in this outing and, hard to believe, it's shoddy in comparison to earlier entries. More inept than inspiring, it pushes its limp agenda with all the efficiency of a shopping cart that's missing its wheels.

Alas, the finale to this epic crap-fest, THE PRODIGAL PLANET (1983) is more difficult to locate, so that'll have to wait until another issue. [One final note: I love the Mark IV trailers for Christian pics even *I* wouldn't sit through—such as the Dee Wallace Stone vehicles ALL THE KING'S HORSES and THE SHEPHERD. I didn't realize she was *ever* that desperate for rent money.]



APOCALYPSE (1998).

The latest, greatest entry in the Rapture Genre is this end-of-the-world epic, brought to you by the Christian dickwads at Jack Van Impe Ministries (with their head-shithead not only appearing in the movie, but credited with script supervision). Although shot on video, this doesn't stop director Peter Gerretsen from taking the enterprise dead-serious and demonstrating surprising filmmaking savvy.

As full-scale war erupts in the Middle East, all of the hyper-religious folks ready themselves for upcoming Biblical prophecies. Meanwhile, hotshot schmuck-newsman Bronson Pearl (Richard Nester) heads to the front lines of Israel to report on this "Battle of Armageddon." But just as the bombs begin flying and The End seems inevitable, a Miracle occurs, which causes the killer nukes to disappear and has a fragment of the population vanishing straight out of their clothes (which are left neatly folded and pressed, since God ain't no slob). Yes, you godless sinners, it's Rapture Time (again).

In the wake of this world-wide panic and confusion, enter Franco Macalusso (Sam Bornstein), a European politician/antichrist who accepts credit for this salvation, and keeps the movie spinning into out-of-control directions. The "suspense" builds as Franco takes control of the media, wins over the people, and denounces that long-dead Jesus jerk. Meanwhile, the scariest moments have Bronson's sweetie, network-anchorwoman Helen Hannah (Leigh Lewis), watching a videotape of Jack and Rexella Van Impe spouting their bile. Of course, only Van Impe has the solution of how to save the remains of humankind and expose this false messiah. She then has to persuade the ever-cynical Bronson—who has gone so far as to dig up the (now-empty) grave of his father—to Believe.

Throughout, the filmmakers twist genuine, out-of-context news footage (warfare, politicians, disasters) to their own god-fearing agenda. They also have the smarts to mix their propaganda with cheap thrills (such as cattle-cars full of Christians). Unfortunately, the hackneyed human drama is less than enticing, with Nester & Lewis displaying all of the talent of soap opera stars, but with none of the looks or charisma. It also comes with an execrable Christian Rock soundtrack. Somebody definitely ponied up a bunch of cash for this flick. I just hope it wasn't the poor saps who believe in this nonsense, donate their Social Security checks, but still can't afford indoor plumbing. In the end, this APOCALYPSE is so spectacularly earnest, ambitious and hilariously wrongheaded, that it becomes the HEAVEN'S GATE of fundamentalist hokum.

GIMLET (European Trash Cinema; 1995).

For this effective Spanish horror-thriller, director José Luis Acosta breathes some welcome menace into the serial killer genre. Keeping the story simple yet seductive, he never forgets that it's first and foremost, a character-driven drama, sprinkled with unexpected glimpses of all-too-human pain and melancholy (often within the unlikeliest candidates).

Best known for '70s arthouse fare like Bunuel's THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE, Angela Molina stars as Julia, who gets a rude surprise when she discovers a fresh human heart stashed in her tavern. While the police question Julia about possible perpetrators, viewers will most likely suspect a faceless sicko who secretly videotapes Julia throughout her day. Continuing his creepy 'courtship', he begins sending her home-made videos in which he shows off his hobbies (such as slicing himself up with a handy knife).

Viggo Mortensen (THE REFLECTING SKIN) brings this volatile Valentino to life, and though his character has few quirks we haven't seen before, his

persuasive presence keeps them fresh—such as when he hosts a romantic dinner for two, and his date is a television set playing Julia's image. Of course, when she becomes smitten with a cop, this doesn't sit well with her *true* love, so it's only logical that he eliminate anyone who gets too close to her. Meanwhile, Julia becomes increasingly curious about this stalker, and is sucked into his obsession.

At its best when focusing on the central psychological conflict (the supporting characters are dispensable), Acosta comes up with stylish, potent images (e.g. our psycho laying naked in bed, watching voyeuristic videos of Julia, while stroking his picture tube) and two terrific lead perfs. In the small, but pivotal psycho role, the truly scary Mortensen steals every scene, plus it's refreshing to see that Molina is far from the usual, stalked bimbo. All in all, a slight, well-made treat that elicits some genuine chills. (FYI, The title refers to the cocktail, which is said to have been a favorite of Philip Marlowe's.)

THE AUTOMOBILE GRAVEYARD [Le Cimetière des Voitures] (European Trash Cinema; 1981).

Spanish absurdist Fernando Arrabal is best known for his groundbreaking plays, but over the years, he's also found time to direct several astonishing films. This is one of his more obscure efforts, loosely based on his own 1959 play, which was also one of Arrabal's earliest, most controversial works. Unfortunately, this print lacked English subtitles, so I was on shaky footing when it came to the plot (which is often difficult to decipher in Arrabal's films, even *with* subtitles).

Set against a burnt-out backdrop of abandoned cars, strange characters stumble about an auto graveyard, and one night, a party erupts complete with naked bodies, bizarre costumes, punks, and the ambiance of a trashy European disco. It's Beckett meets Studio 54. Unfortunately, stormtrooper cops interrupt the fun by burning their records and making everyone conform.

Quickly twisting into a post-apocalyptic Christ parable, Alain Bashung (who also wrote the music) stars as Emanou, a rock 'n' roll guitarist/savior (in the original play, a jazz trumpeter), who hands out hamburgers to the grubby masses. Juliet Berto co-stars as Dila, a Mary Magdalene sort, who models outrageous fashions (a birthday cake dress) and often floats in a dolphin tank. In between their ragtag raves, Emanou heals a blind man with a puff of magician's smoke, lays hands on a guy in an iron lung, and has a Last Supper accompanied by a saxophone solo. Emanou is finally caught by the police (and betrayed by a Judas-like pal, of course) when he plays at a makeshift concert.

Arrabal radically reworks and opens up his play for the film medium, sometimes with positive results (Dila's conversations with a tiny angel she keeps in a glass jar), and often to negative (updating his original jazz musicians to annoying EuroPop). Another drawback is Bashung, who lacks any trace of charisma. Still, Arrabal doesn't skimp on ridiculous moments, like a swimming competition at an indoor pool, during which Emanou *walks* across the water. Fabulously half-baked, this'll definitely try your patience at times, but if you've got the willpower, Arrabal certainly has the imagination to keep you amused.

THE SQUEEZE (European Trash Cinema; 1977).

I've reviewed a lot of weird-assed Stacy Keach flicks in SHOCK CINEMA, and while I'm sure the guy has made a few relatively sane films in his lifetime, I'm hard pressed to remember them. THE NINTH CONFIGURATION? END OF THE ROAD? THE DION BROTHERS? I give up...This brutal British crime drama co-stars David Hemmings, was directed by a young Michael Apted, and I knew this was another prime Keach-o-rama when he makes his entrance, looking like he's at the low-point of a week-long bender.

Balding, bleary-eyed, bleeding (due to a drunken tumble down a flight of stairs), and sporting a so-so British accent, Keach plays Jim Naboth, an ex-Scotland Yard sot-turned-private eye (imagine Charles Bukowski as Philip Marlowe). But when his ex-wife and her new boyfriend's daughter are kidnapped by slimy Hemmings, Naboth (a poster child for the d.t.'s) tosses on his trenchcoat, dives into the UK underworld, and tries to remain sober for a few days. Meanwhile, her wealthy beau (Edward Fox) is forced to pay the ransom by being the inside-man for his own company's armored car robbery.

Slowly killing himself with booze, Naboth sees this case as one final attempt at redemption. And boy, does this guy go through shit—such as when he's stripped naked by crooks and left in the street (with a handy shoe over his privates). Chalk this up as another challenging, self-deprecating performance from Keach, who not only gives new meaning to the word "seedy," but brings a welcome humanity to this cruel and moderately compelling yarn.

Along with a couple of wonderfully grim twists and a kick-ass, righteous finale, the movie is at its best when Keach is pushing the envelope. In addition, Hemmings has fun as a sadistic slimebag who forces Naboth's ex (Carol White) to strip for him and his cronies (accompanied by The Stylistics, no less). Apted's direction is tight, with a script grounded in believable characters and backdrops, plus it's particularly refreshing to watch a crime flick where all of the hard-boiled crooks don't talk like Tarantino wannabes.

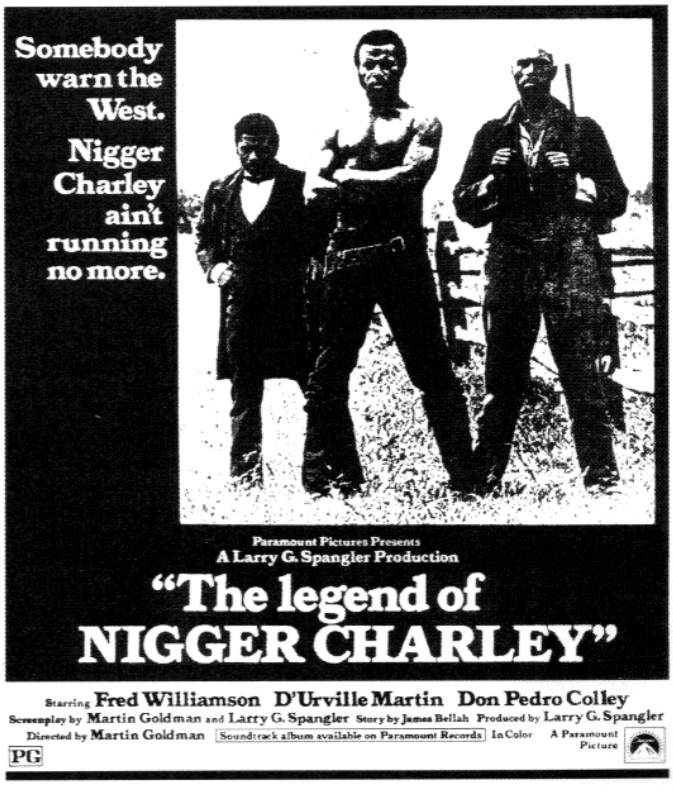
THE LEGEND OF NIGGER CHARLEY (Shocking Videos; 1972).

If you're still unfamiliar with Fred Williamson's career—from his football days with the Kansas City Chiefs, to his hard-hitting filmography, to his unmatched (and well-deserved) ego—you're in desperate need of lessons. This tough, proud flick is a great place to start, since it's one of Williamson's earliest successes, as well as Paramount's most profitable 1972 release. Cementing The Hammer's macho career, this episodic, runaway-slave western helped jumpstart the entire blaxploitation genre of the '70s.

Set in the Old South of the mid-1800's, Williamson has the title role of a blacksmith slave who's suddenly given his freedom, on the eve of a plantation auction. This doesn't sit well with a nigger-hating sadist (the ever-repellent John Ryan), who has other plans for this hunky chunk of property. But when Charley murders this white asshole, he's suddenly on the run (accompanied by wise-cracking D'Urville Martin and chrome-domed Don Pedro Colley), with vengeful professional killers in pursuit.

When the trio makes a pit stop in a lily-white town, their tepid reception plays like a serious BLAZING SADDLES. But instead of running from his trackers, stalwart Charley holds his ground, with well-ventilated honkies piling up during a barroom shoot-out. Picking up a few misfits along the way (including a crazy ol' coot and a young black gunman), Charley finally turns do-gooder by aiding an abused farmer against a hysterical, gospel-spouting Reverend (THE ROCKFORD FILES's Joe Santos) and his posse. Of course, when Charley isn't fending off these marauders, he's romancing the farmer's half-breed missus (Tricia O'Neil). In a pleasant turn, a bunch of Indians are unthreatening, while every white character seems to be a South of the Mason-Dixon shithead.

Directed by Martin Goldman, this stands out from the usual Times Square fare, in part due to its western backdrop, which Fred would continue to embrace (ADIOS AMIGO, BOSS NIGGER, TAKE A HARD RIDE). Offering an early indication of Williamson's on-screen potential, he combines action, romance and simple dramatics (which is more than most of today's action heroes can accomplish), while Martin and Colley display a refreshing camaraderie. Followed by THE SOUL OF NIGGER CHARLEY, this offers proof of just how superficial many of the later blaxploitation items were.



FIGURES IN A LANDSCAPE (VSoM; 1970).

Director Joseph Losey has been responsible for plenty of great films. Beginning in Hollywood, and moving overseas after getting blacklisted in the '50s (for refusing to testify before those HUAC shitbags), his best-known pics include Pinter-scripted fare like ACCIDENT and THE GO-BETWEEN, as well as more eccentric outings like MODESTY BLAISE. This is another atypical endeavor, based on a novel by Barry England, and pairing a pre-JAWS Robert Shaw with a young, A CLOCKWORK ORANGE-era Malcolm McDowell.

The plot is deceptively simple, as two prison escapees try to make it across 400 miles of rugged wilderness on foot, through mud, rain, snow, and the occasional bullet. It's survival of the smartest, as this pair—initially handcuffed from behind—match wits against an omnipresent pursuit helicopter. Shaw (who also wrote the script) is the grizzled MacConnachie, while MacDowell plays the wimpier Ansell.

We never learn exactly who Mac and Ansell are, why they were imprisoned, or whether it was for political or criminal reasons. Keeping us in the dark, Losey strips the story to its essentials, forcing us to deal head-on with the leads' grueling physical ordeal, as they steal food and an old rifle, and become uneasy traveling companions. Stretched to nearly two-hours, they avoid foot soldiers, run from fire bombs tossed into the high brush, and Mac eventually shoots one of the helicopter's crew.

Shaw is restrained for much of the film, while McDowell practices the type of sniveling which would typecast his later career. Both characters remain frustratingly underdeveloped, but when Mac becomes obsessed with killing this flying beast, you can definitely see the genesis of his Quint. What makes this film work as well as it does is the astounding helicopter footage and ever-changing terrain. The photography by Henri Alekan (Cocteau's BEAUTY AND THE BEAST) and Peter Suschitzky is breathtaking, as the chopper skims the earth, stalking the pair as they cross this harsh landscape. And like these never-seen helicopter pilots, everyone else in the film is 'faceless', with eyes obscured by sunglasses or goggles. In the end, this is a stark adventure, but also so heavy with pretension that it's difficult to care much about the outcome.

THESE ARE THE DAMNED [a.k.a. The Damned] (1961).

An earlier, even odder outing for director Joseph Losey was this cautionary sci-fi drama, which is also one of Hammer Productions' most disturbing releases. Of course, American audiences barely got to see this b&w feature, since it wasn't released until 1965, and in NYC, was dumped onto the bottom half of a double bill, underneath Omar Sharif's forgettable GENGHIS KHAN. This somber nuclear-age thriller deserved better.

It begins with a young Oliver Reed wallowing in his element as a brooding Teddy Boy named King (first glimpsed as the hilarious "Black Leather Rock" plays on the soundtrack), who leads a pack of rebellious bikers in the seaside town of Weymouth. Shirley Anne Field is his sexy sister Joan, who takes a break from King's repressive hold (you see, dear brother has a rather incestuous fascination with her) by running off with middle-aged MacDonald Carey.

What starts out like any angry-young-biker movie quickly shifts gears when the pair leap a top secret military base's fence, in an vain attempt to elude the pissed-off King, and encounter a group of government-supervised youngsters who live underground, are isolated from the rest of the world, and have skin as cold as the dead. The answer? As misguided as ever, government nincompoops are trying to save human civilization from its own self-destruction by turning out irradiated offspring who will be able to survive Earth's nuclear meltdown. Of course, this situation doesn't bode well for the adult trio, who are slowly succumbing to radiation sickness. It's impossible to wring an upbeat ending out of this chilling scenario, no matter how hard you squeeze.

Unlike most US sci-fi films of the period, which were more preoccupied with voyages to the bottom of the sea or absent-minded professors, this tale is unusually grim. Based on the novel "The Children of Light" by H.L. Lawrence, Losey comes up with an intelligent handling of the idea, with its realism giving heft to the film's message. Although the romance between 50-ish Carey and 20-year-old Joan is forced (as well as another middle-aged scriptwriter's wet dream), all of the leads are effective, with Reed a stand-out as Losey plays to his combustible strengths. Co-starring Viveca Lindfors as a spacey sculptress who lives near the base, this is a quirky, thought-provoking drama.

JAPANARAMA VOL.1 (Video International, West Hi 201, 65 Hideri-cho, Saiin, Ukyo-ku, Kyoto 615-0065 Japan / $20 + $5 postage; 1997).

Welcome to a brain-numbing, two-hour compilation of the weirdest, most outrageous moments from current Japanese television. And despite a lack of subtitles, this is all so bizarre, fast-paced and colorful that few are needed.

Although there are a few slow portions (music acts, clips from old movies), most of this is prime material. There's a game show where losers are bungee-catapulted over a gorge, naked, with flares strapped to their feet; transvestites try to apply their make-up while on a moving roller coaster; and a program makes its contestants (often underdressed females) sit in a tank of boiling water, in exchange for commercial air-time. Much of this is rather sadistic, but the contestants seem to love it! There's an outdoor wrestling show where guys are tossed out of the ring, onto a giant glue-trap or a bed of fireworks; live scorpions are secretly placed on people's heads; and men in bathing suits slam each other with buckets of hot wax, during a game of rock-paper-scissors.

My favorite bits are the trippy commercials, which range from a (badly-named) product called "Funky Egg" to a video store that proudly boasts of stocking "rape and animal videos." It's particularly amusing to watch high-profile US stars happily kissing corporate ass in Japanese ads. There are car commercials with Mel Gibson, Brad Pitt, Jean Reno, Leonardo DeCaprio, and Ray Charles (who can't even drive a car!); a saki-peddling, samurai Madonna battling a lame CGI dragon; Michael J. Fox hawking fishing gear; and The Three Tenors for an airline. By far, the most annoying has Quentin Tarantino playing an action hero for PerfecTV. This vastly entertaining sampler of Japan's media madness makes excellent party fare, and *almost* made me think that American TV wasn't the most IQ-squashing fare on the planet, after all.

24 HORAS DE SEXO EXPLICILO and **48 HORAS DE SEXO ALUCIMENTE (Shocking Videos; 198?).**

In the past few years, the outrageous horror films of Jose Mojica Marins (Coffin Joe) have blossomed in the US, but it's not until now that his hardcore outings have surfaced (alas, without subtitles). Originally made only to finance a future Coffin Joe pic, Marins (who, thankfully, doesn't actually screw on-camera) did his damnedest to actually turn *off* his audience, but instead, 24 HORAS was Marins' biggest Brazilian hit. Go figure.

Opening with a limp cover of The Captain and Tennille's "Love Will Keep Us Together," 24 HORAS follows a bunch of horny guys and butt-ugly women, as they converge on a beach house for one of the lamest, 24-hour orgies ever committed to film stock. In the process, Marins captures a full tableau of hardcore screwing (which is exactly like any US porno film, except both the men and women have more body hair), while a fat guy roams amongst the couplings,

keeping score of the sexual antics. Giving each male a point when he cums, this slob also happily wipes down the jism-covered ladies. Who will win? You won't care, particularly when a stray German Shepherd begins humping one of these gals in all-too-blunt detail. Giving new meaning to the term 'doggie-style,' if this isn't some outrageous special effect, I think I'm gonna be ill.

Filmed primarily inside one house, Marins certainly didn't stretch his budget. But in addition to the endless insert shots, he piles on such weirdness as talking genitalia. Above all, these women are grim, and I'm surprised there's a stiff dick in the house. Where did Marins find them? Rejects from a local whorehouse? I swear at least one of 'em had a visible yeast infection, and even by the usual porno standards, that ain't pretty.

For the more ambitious and playful 48 HORAS, Marins experiments with the usual sex-pic expectations, while appearing on-camera (without his Coffin Joe garb) as a director at work on his latest project—a historical, Roman-era schtupp-epic (think CALIGULA on a Full Moon budget). Armed with a bigger, more photogenic cast (including the overweight queer dude from 24 HORAS, who now keeps track of the cum-shots with a computer) and mostly taking place on one artificial set, Marins presides over the non-stop fornication. A circus-like atmosphere prevails, and when one naked guy suddenly has a heart attack, it barely breaks the concentration of the other performers. It also segues into one gal's pubescent trauma, after she was beaten for watching animals rut. Her answer? Simply slide into a cow costume and get screwed by a guy in a bull suit!

Often revolving less around the sexcapades than the director's life, this is worth a look, if only to see Marins directing a couple of fucking horses (with plenty of loving, up-close footage). As hard-edged as the first, this has its fill of engorged dicks and horny dames, but it's also a strangely self-reflexive exercise, since you not only see the money shots, but a crew that's filming it all. Meshing the best of both worlds, Marins hauls the standard porno conventions into his own distinctively grotesque realm.

THE RAT SAVIOR [Izbavitelj] [a.k.a. The Redeemer] (VSoM; 1977).

Based on a novel by Soviet writer Alexander Greene (a victim of the Stalin purges), this Yugoslav fantasy from director Krsto Papic begins with Bosch-Lite imagery under the opening credits. It then takes us to 1931 Zagreb, where rats are assuming human form and the story becomes a crude, subtext-laden, rodent-themed INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS.

Ivica Vidovic stars as an unemployed writer, Ivan Gajski, who's currently sleeping in the park, as the city is being overrun by both poverty and rats (to battle these problems, the local government promises "every cloud has a silver lining"). While squatting in an abandoned bank building, Ivan discovers a conspiracy which has human-like rats taking the place of local bigwigs. Of course, when he tells the authorities, no clues are found, as this enters more allegorical territories. You see, since these impostors feed on hunger, war and epidemics, and horde riches that no ordinary man could possibly need, it's all-too-obvious that the country has been taken over by these vermin. Eventually, we learn that a Rat Savior has popped his head out, initiating this turmoil.

Ivan also meets the beautiful Sonia, whose scientist-father is trying to find a poison for this threat (one amusing alternative is a cannibal rat, which devours its own kind in suitably grisly fashion). When dead, half-human rats (actors with buck teeth and hair glued to their faces) are discovered, it gives Ivan a weapon which both stops *and* exposes them for what they are. Still, it's getting difficult for the increasingly-paranoid Gajski to tell who's a rat, or who's his true love.

While the production is relatively simple, Papic & Co. skillfully maintain a thin borderline between everyday reality and the fantastic, while grounding their deceptively simple storyline in issues all too prevalent in '70s Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, the special effects are either crude or non-existent, while queasy rat-attacks are kept to a minimum. Instead, this is a low-budget, heartfelt fable, saying more about society and the government than you'd expect.

SMASHING TIME (Anchor Bay; 1967).

During the late '60s, studios were scrambling to capture the youth counterculture on-screen. A handful were successful. More often, they were unintentionally hilarious. Toss this UK item into the later category, but at least it boasts colorfully atrocious production design and a self-deprecating veneer. It's also helped along by its personable leads, with Rita Tushingham and Lynn Redgrave playing two naive young birds from the North, who swing into '60s London in search of kicks.

In this groovy tale, Yvonne (Lynn) and Brenda (Rita) hit the big city and their first stop is trendy Carnaby Street. Yvonne (who acts like an even ditzier Melanie Griffith) is the boy-crazy of the pair, while Brenda is the more sensible one; and never as savvy as they think they are, within hours the two are robbed off all their cash. Yvonne then gets a job as a "hostess" (not realizing the *depth* of her responsibilities), Brenda takes charge of a Mod-a-licious clothing shop, and inept Yvonne can't even hold down a job at the latest posh club, Sweeney Todd. Worst of all, a trendy photobug (Michael York) who points out fashion *faux pas* for a London paper makes Yvonne his latest dud. But in typically nitwitted movie fashion, these girls soon go on a rollercoaster ride from penniless to pop icons, with Yvonne making a hit record ("I'm So Young"), and York turning Brenda into the fashion model superstar of the moment.

Director Desmond Davis (CLASH OF THE TITANS) is hamhanded all the way, as are the wretched soundtrack tunes, which directly comment on the action. And when stuck for a fresh idea, he resorts to idiotic slapstick (A can of aerosol manure? A museum of robots go on a rampage? There's even a fuckin' pie fight!). In the end, this is a live-action cartoon of excess, pretense, and disposable culture. Still, no matter how much the era appeals to you, it's impossible to warm up to the flick, since these two girls are so godawful stupid. Weird, fast-paced and crammed with eye-searing fashions, the end result certainly isn't good, but it works as nostalgic eye candy.

LESSONS OF DARKNESS (1992).

Although I often wish director Werner Herzog was still making outrageously-obsessed features with the late, irate Klaus Kinski, his recent documentaries have a power and consistency that's impossible to ignore. That's never been more evident than in this 50-minute excursion, which is also one of his most visually enthralling works, as Herzog again hauls his camera into a world rarely seen by his audience.

Narrated by Herzog, this is an apocalyptic visit to the post-war vistas of Kuwait. It begins with Werner flying over a major city, taking in all that would be destroyed in only a few hours. The remainder is the aftermath, a charred landscape of twisted metal and newborn craters, which seem less like reality than some mind-blowing sci-fi backdrop. Along the way, a few survivors describe the toll this conflict has taken on their families. In "Satan's National Park", the camera records a one-time forest, now soaked in oil and deadly to wildlife. Then, there are the Kuwaiti oil fields, which burn high and bright with flaming geysers, their thick black smoke literally blotting out the sun. This provides an aerial view unlike any other, and with little commentary to intrude on its visuals, it transforms into a gloriously grim vision, as firefighters attempt to cap these infernos. As captured by Herzog, it's difficult to imagine a place on Earth that's closer to the boundaries of Hell.

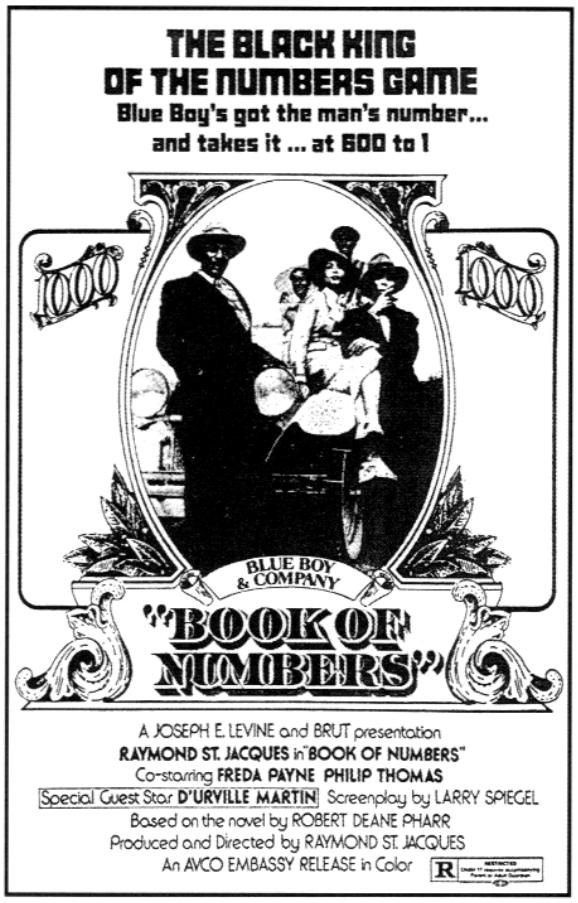
Mind you, this is no political rant. Specific countries are never an issue. Instead, this captures the devastation of modern warfare from ground zero, and turns this destruction into breathtaking poetry. Meshing the organic and industrial worlds, each at their most chaotic, high praise goes to Paul Berriff's jawdropping cinematography. In addition, the choice of music (Wagner, Verdi, Mahler, and Schubert) is ethereal, the images hypnotic, and the overall effect, devastating. An unforgettable cinematic trip unlike any other, and a far cry from any post-war coverage you'll ever see on the network news.

TIFFANY JONES (Luminous; 1973).

If you're at all familiar with director Pete Walker's more infamous work (HOUSE OF WHIPCORD, FRIGHTMARE), this empty-headed crock of UK kitsch will be a distinct change of pace. Based on a Daily Mail comic strip by Pat Tourret and Jenny Butterworth, this sexy (more often stupid) escapade stars Anouska Hempel (BLACKSNAKE!) as our title-bubblehead. Imagine a topless Brenda Starr, set amidst swinging London, just after rigor mortis has hit that groovy era.

Famed model Tiffany Jones is a leggy blonde bombshell with a mind of her own and a tendency to doff her fashionable clothing at the most inopportune moments. Ray Brooks plays shy photographer Guy, who continually walks in on half-naked Tiffany (in the pic's loose concept of humor), while Susan Sheers is gal-pal Jo. When the blackhearted president of Zirdana (one of those fictional, Eastern Bloc nations, located next to Boris & Natasha's Pottsylvania) takes a fancy to a photo of Ms. Jones, she's hired for a fake Zirdana photo shoot and soon thrust into a hotbed of political intrigue and lust. Along with a supporting cast of 'wacky' spies, mobster weapons dealers, and the true ruler of the country (of course, a hot young prince), Tiffany manages to be kidnapped, mistaken as a prostitute (not exactly a leap of the imagination), and eventually sets up Zirdana's horny head honcho during a scandalous, naked "garden party" photo-op.

This is as vapid as any comic strip adaptation, but few have this many dangerous curves. The comely Ms. Hempel certainly embraces her role, with any excuse to strip off her top, take a bath, or indulge in a gratuitous tit shot. Of course, acting isn't much of an issue here, since everyone is such a one-dimensional buffoon. Awash in gaudy fashions, lame-ass humor and Tiffany's feminine wiles, this lightweight endeavor has plenty of bare flesh, but little else.



DESIDERIA AND THE DRAGON RING (Video Junkie; 1994).

I've rarely reviewed costume fantasy films in SC (since most of them suck), but unlike the usual sword 'n' sorcery silliness, this 3-hour, Italian TV mini-series got my attention, for several reasons. It's directed by Lamberto Bava, who (while never reaching the heights of papa Mario) can often crank out a cool flick. It also stars Franco Nero (DJANGO) and, as a treat for the eyes, the always-smoldering Anna Falchi (DELLAMORTE, DELLAMORE).

Set a "long, long time ago," Nero plays the infamous Dragon King, who kills anyone in the way of his conquering frenzy. But when he finds an infant in a wolves' cave, he claims her as his new daughter, Selvaggia. Only his real li'l girl, Desideria, realizes that something is wrong (beginning when this baby tries to take a feral bite out of her hand), and she's soon being blamed for Selvaggia's evil-doings. As an adult, Desideria (Falchi) doesn't care about the throne, and instead falls for an imprisoned rebel, Prince Victor. Running away when pressured to marry some neanderthal, that's when Desideria gets her first earful of her daddy's cruel ways. Selvaggia, on the other hand, supernaturally schemes to become Queen and snag daddy's all-powerful Dragon Ring.

Proudly wallowing in cheap melodrama, there's plenty of swordplay and jousting during a tournament to see who will ascend to the throne; a love spell that Selvaggia tosses onto Victor; and a crystal sword that can destroy the dragon's power. Speaking of that dragon, it's beautifully sculpted by FX-whiz Sergio Stivaletti, but once it starts moving, you won't be able to stop laughing. Only a tad more convincing than H.R. Pufnstuf, it's obviously two guys struggling inside of a cheesy monster suit.

Despite some silly moments, the cast performs admirably, while the story resonates with sibling conflicts and rebellion against stupid parents. With his eye-liner and cheap wig, Nero might look more like a drummer for Spinal Tap, but makes a fine King; while Bava sprinkles the story with amazing images, from talking door knobs and desert witches, to Desideria's living dolls. While never actually sumptuous, Bava captures the proper mood and a shopworn realism, more akin to a grubby EXCALIBUR than US-drivel like MERLIN. Sure, it's basically a costumed soap opera, but in a time of TV-send-ups like XENA, it's refreshing to see a fantasy that's told with a strong, serious edge.

BOOK OF NUMBERS (J4HI; 1973).

Raymond St. Jacques is best known to grindhouse patrons for supporting gigs in hits like BLACK CAESAR, but he's also respected for loftier fare such as Kurt Weill's LOST IN THE STARS and Jules Dassin's UPTIGHT. In this instance, he not only starred in, but directed and produced this Depression-era drama. Although its laid-back pace might disappoint the usual Black Action fan, this is a winning little period piece, with heartfelt characters and the Southern numbers-racket as its backdrop.

St. Jacques plays Blueboy Harris, who arrives in the town of El Dorado, Arkansas, with a plan to set up a numbers biz and rake in the cash. A pre-MIAMI VICE Philip M. [Michael] Thomas co-stars as his protégé, and together, they set up business in the back of a beauty parlor and hire on some local help, who have colorful monikers like Kid Flick, Blip Blip and Billy Bowlegs (the later played by the late great D'Urville Martin). Of course, it isn't long before White numbers runners in nearby towns want a piece of his action, with the tone changing in the second half, the minute these "crazy crackers" begin killing innocent kids. No surprise, just about Caucasian is immoral, greedy, corrupt, and thoroughly believable. My favorite moment has Blueboy's men going undercover as Klansmen, and accidentally running into some genuine bed-sheeted KKK'ers. Meanwhile, singer Freda Payne co-stars as Thomas' girlfriend.

Making the most of his middling budget, St. Jacques indulges in a few commercially-necessary moments of violence, but primarily, this is a day-to-day look at Blueboy staking out his territory in the White Man's world. Though St. Jacques can't shoot an action scene for shit, he definitely knows how to bring life to his characters. Often, the central plot even takes a backseat to smaller, more introspective sequences, such as an entire barroom silently listening to the radio as Joe Louis wins the championship against Braddock. Despite some faults, this is an honorable chunk of nostalgia, full of humor and humanity.

BUTTERFLIES (E.I. Independent; 1974).

It's great to see the films of director Joseph Sarno getting some legit releases, after years of watching them as 6th-generation bootlegs. This German-lensed, softcore-X, nympho-romp stars blond Marie Forsa as a country cutie, Denise, who journeys to the big city for some urban schlong, in every shape and size. You see, down on the farm, there's only one guy to go down on, and this dullard's personality is even stiffer than his dick. Ditching her chores, Denise hitchhikes to Munich (doing Claudette Colbert one better, by mooning potential rides) and dreams of becoming a famous fashion model.

Of course, there's the usual array of gross lechers in her way, including mega-hung Harry Reems as a suave playboy who tosses her into bed and has her crazed for more. Unbeknownst to Denise, nightclub-owner Reems has a stable of lovelies who're ready to wrap their lips 'round his tentpole. And while round-heeled Denise is deciding if this urban bacchanale is her cup of tea, why not check out the wild side with Frank's lesbian partner? Plus, where else are you going to see Harry Reems romping joyously through a flowery meadow?

As usual for Sarno, this is both deftly photographed and overlong (112 minutes!). Filmed in English, it's painful to watch some of the supporting actresses, as they struggle with the simplest dialogue. Still, Sarno can make the hoariest storyline erotic, and he's aided immeasurably by Forsa's naturalistic performance, which actually has you believing her sexual passion—unlike today's porn starlets, who, during sex, look like they're mentally planning out their grocery list...This is only one of three classic Sarno flicks released by E.I. The other two 1973 releases are GIRL MEETS GIRL (a.k.a. BIBI) and his horror outing VEIL OF BLOOD (unnecessarily retitled as VAMPIRE ECSTASY).

KISS ME MONSTER [Bésame, Monstruo] (Anchor Bay; 1967).

Whenever I decide to waste 90 minutes of my life on Jess Franco drivel, I try to pick one of his trippy outings from the '60s, and this wedge of EuroCheese fits the bill. Equipped with garish (and skimpy) fashions, colorful

photography and wall-to-wall tease, this is a solid entry in the BARBARELLA-esque school of camp cinema. Reprising their sexy detective roles from SADISTEROTICA ('67), Janine Reynaud (SUCCUBUS) and Rossana Yanni star as Diana and Regina, two sultry sirens who battle a mad scientist who's "developing humans out of tin cans."

Heading out on a Caribbean undercover assignment, Diana & Regina pose as talentless showgirls (their nightclub act is a howl, including a saxophone duet in top hats 'n' tails). But as corpses turn up around town, these leggy lovelies encounter the movie's embarrassing excuse for a Monster (played by a muscleman in a red Speedo, who looks more like a Christopher Street bartender), a secret society that sports black KKK hoods and red sheets, and plenty of nefarious folks, all searching for a deceased professor's formula, which can create artificial, half-naked, zombie mandroids.

Mixing the lightweight lechery of then-trendy secret agent flicks with Franco's legendary narrative confusion, our comely (but insipid) duo are continually abducted—with the best moments involving several absurd double crosses, and Regina's kidnapping by rabid jungle lesbians. Padded out to 76 minutes with unnecessary (but visually cool) nightclub dancing and gratuitous nudity, Reynaud and Yanni can't act for spit, but at least they're legitimately sexy, unlike today's siliconed Barbie-wannabes (alas, blonde bombshell Yanni remains the most clothed). The bland dubbing doesn't help matters. If you're searching for coherency, you're shit out of luck, but if your bag is idiotic (god, I hope they're intentional) laughs, this'll be right up your alley.

ANGEL'S FLIGHT (Shocking Videos; 1962).

Filmed in the Bunker Hill area of Los Angeles, this b&w crime flick was long-shelved, and is only now surfacing. Far from some lost masterpiece, it is instead, a lovably overwrought B-movie from directors Raymond Nassour and K.W. Richardson, featuring two terrific characters: A drunken slob, drowning his lost love with a bottle, and a psycho-babe with murder on her mind.

William Thourlby stars as Ben Wiley, a once-famous, now-hack reporter, who's happily indulging in a three-week-long bender. One night, Ben accidentally stumbles into a pretty femme fatale named Liz (Indus Arthur, with a blonde Bettie Page haircut), and in his drunken fog, mistakes this dish for an "angel." Meanwhile, dead bodies are turning up in the Bunker Hill area, with their throats slit from ear to ear. Yes, this dame is to blame, and from the way sleazebag men look at her, there's no shortage of potential victims. By day, Liz is a rhythm-challenged exotic dancer, but as the investigative Wiley (and the cops) get closer on her trail, she gets an itch for him. It all reaches a crescendo when Ben and Liz finally link paths, sending the plot into trauma overdrive.

The production is steeped in realistic, working class locales, so even when the drama is weak (which is often), the backdrop rings true. Just as TV's NAKED CITY pegged NYC's most intriguing vistas, this does the same for Los Angeles, from dump apartments straight out of a Bukowski poem, to the Angel's Flight angled railway—one of LA's oldest landmarks. They also have a great eye for supporting slobs, who look like they were scrapped from a nearby gutter, including future GOLDEN GIRL Rue McClanahan as a barroom floozy. While it never attains the heights of four-star obscurities like BLAST OF SILENCE, this FLIGHT is a lean, effective outing, offering up 72 minutes of hard-boiled twists and crude streetwise charms.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, MR. LEONARD COHEN (1965) and **THE SONG OF LEONARD COHEN (1980).**

In the past thirty-plus years, Leonard Cohen has written volumes of poetry, two novels and a wealth of unforgettable music. Unfortunately, in the US, he's probably best known for his contributions to the NATURAL BORN KILLERS soundtrack; while in Poland, his records sell better than Michael Jackson. Film footage of Cohen is sparse, so it was great to find a pair of documentaries, from two, very different times in his life.

1965's LADIES AND GENTS sheds light on the beginnings of Cohen's career, in a 44-minute, b&w profile of a young poet, long before he put music to his words. Originally conceived by the National Film Board of Canada as a portrait of four new poets on the road, the filmmakers quickly realized that the other three were duds, and focused entirely on the 31-year-old Cohen, who instantly won over crowds with his counterculture charisma.

Then living on the Greek island of Hydra, this brief film mixes Cohen's readings with his reality. We see him sack out in a $3-per-night Montreal hotel, discuss his well-to-do roots (which included Frat president), and shoot the shit in late-nite cafés. Leonard also reads snippets of his poems on-stage, and even watches some of this movie's rough footage, while commenting in the finest, self-deprecating MST3K tradition. Cohen makes a terrific central figure, but the filmmakers (writer Donald Brittain, who co-directed with Don Owen) continually screw-up with their over-ripe narration ("Cohen finds nourishment both in the crowds and solitude"). After awhile, I wanted to kick the narrator in the teeth, toss out the script, and let Cohen do the storytelling himself. Still, Leonard's irreverant sense of humor and likable presense peels through their ineptitude.

Happily, 1980's THE SONG OF is a more laid-back and entertaining profile, with an older, more successful Cohen delving deep into his life and work. Toronto documentary-director Harry Rasky tags along with this singer-poet, mixing in-concert tunes with his simple Montreal lifestyle. A bit craggy, but with his voice still hitting most of the notes, the live songs include "Bird on a Wire," "Suzanne," "So Long, Marianne," "The Gypsy's Wife", "Who By Fire," and "Hey, That's No Way to Say Goodbye."

Incut with these on-stage moments, Cohen is open and likable, as he discusses the birth of his most popular songs, his sketches, family home movies and photos, Phil Spector, and how he encountered Janis Joplin at the Chelsea Hotel (and immortalized her in song). The most telling moments involve the deterioration of his life with fame, and how he pulled it back together in Montreal. Along with an excellent juxaposition of images and song, Rasky isn't afraid to ask difficult questions. In the process, it becomes an intimate portrait of Cohen's pain, shattered relationships and success. Filled with digressions that'll have hardcore fans enthralled and clocking in at 80 minutes, you couldn't ask for a more illuminating documentary of an artist.

FRENCH QUARTER (1978).

If you spent any time at the drive-in during the late-'70s, you're probably all too familiar with Crown-International Pictures, which released such unforgettable direct-to-ozoner dreck as THE POM POM GIRLS, DRACULA'S DOG and HUSTLER SQUAD. This happens to be one of their more original releases, which plays like combination of THE WIZARD OF OZ and PRETTY BABY.

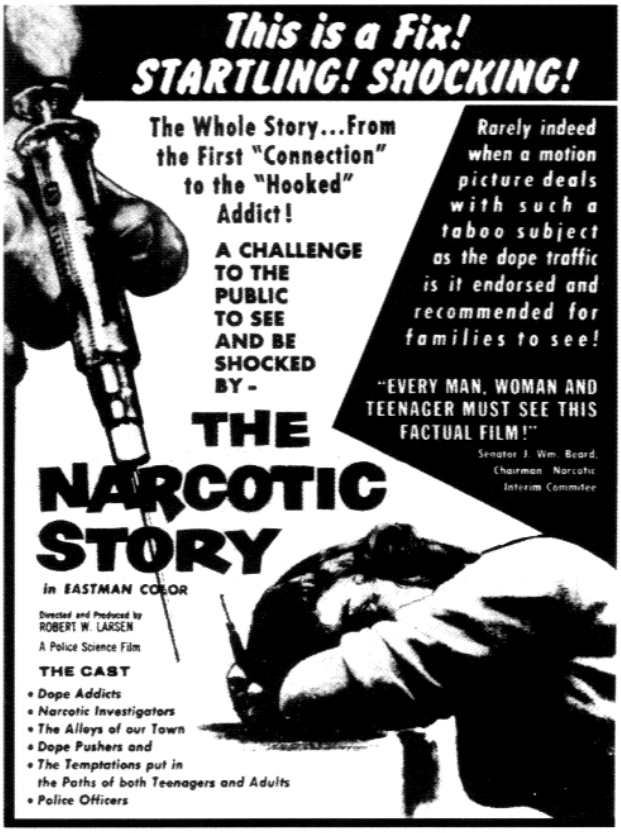
Alisha Fontaine (TEENAGE TRAMP) stars as a young blonde named Christine, who packs up her bags after her Pa's death, and heads to New Orleans. Described by the narrator as "half child, half girl, and all woman," she's soon homeless, penniless and even auditions as a topless dancer. So far, this is standard naive-girl-in-the-big-city schlock, but the script takes an abrupt turn when Christine is slipped a mickey and awakens in the past—as a turn-of-the-century virgin named Trudy, who's the latest addition to a thriving Storyville bordello (or, as the silver-tongued narrator puts it, "a swirling sump of sin and slime"). Along with whores such as "Coke-Eyed" Laura, "Big-Butt" Annie and "Ice-Box" Josie, things get more energetic with the time change. There's a striptease inside a giant birdbath, a lesbian tryst, barroom brawls, auctioning off Trudy's innocence, and what's a film about Louisiana without a snake-filled voodoo ritual?

Meanwhile, everyone in the cast plays two roles, even the most insignificant speaking part. 40's-starlet Virginia Mayo shows up as a present-day bartender, as well as an upper-crust Madame in the past. WILLARD's Bruce Davison plays the bordello's lovesick new piano player, with Vernel Bagneris (PENNIES FROM HEAVEN) as the legendary Jelly Roll Morton. Making good use of his locations, director Dennis Kane does a competent job of hiding his threadbare budget, even if he can't do much about Fontaine's lack of any visible acting skills—or the fact that she's a bit long-in-the-tooth to play an innocent virgin. Even if the story gets a little saccharine at times, it's rare to see this much imagination attached to the Crown-International logo.

THE NARCOTICS STORY (1958).

Always in search of hilariously out-of-date, anti-drug propaganda, I finally got around to this 'educational' classic, which was framed as a police training film and tossed into theatres as prime exploitation. This (self-proclaimed) "true and authentic" flick promises hard info about the recent upsurge in narcotic use, culled from police evidence, plus stories from a heroin addict who wants to save others from a "living death." This "Police Science Production" might lack sync-sound, but it's colorful, lovably amateurish, and you know you're in for a treat when a credit reads "Director of Photography - *Sergeant* Jerry May."

Overflowing with ripe, dime-store-novel narration, we enter the seedy world of those wacky hop-heads, beginning with the roots of their addiction. Lesson One: How does a Good Girl go Bad? In this instance, she starts with her family's liquor cabinet, turns to "goofballs", picks up some unsavory new friends, and after scoring at a seemingly-innocent malt shop, "the marijuana addict" tokes up during an alleyway "tea party." Fortunately, an Einstein cop spots this parked, smoke-filled car and promptly saves society from these horrible grass-fiends. This young girl escapes the bust, but is only sucked deeper into the drug world, and once maryjane has sapped her reasoning, she's soon hooked on mainlined heroin and all of the ills that follow.



Director Robert W. Larsen and writer Roger Garris have concocted a 74-minute diatribe that's so overbearing it makes DRAGNET look warm 'n' fuzzy. Character development is nil, drug paranoia is at a high, and the withdrawal sequences are less depressing than the way cops casually bust up simple parties and ransack apartments. Full of fun 'facts' (I never realized that a needle-less addict will cut open their vein and *pour* the heroin in), the filmmakers unwittingly include useful tips for novice stoners, such as how to clean marijuana, roll it into a "reefer," and properly smoke it. Later, it does the same service for up-and-coming junkies, by demonstrating how to cook your makeshift works. To top it all off, the film has us yearning for the good ol' days when it says that a pound of uncleaned grass sells for a whopping $60.

ANGST (Video Vortex; 1983).

During interviews about his caustic feature debut, I STAND ALONE, director Gasper Noe cited this Austrian film as one of his major influences, so I was compelled to locate a subtitled copy and check it out for myself...Directed by Gerald Kargl, and with cinematography by acclaimed-animator Zbigniew Rybczynski (TANGO, KAFKA), my tolerance is pretty high when it comes to psycho-cinema, but this cold-blooded entry definitely got under my skin.

Taking an almost clinical approach to its incendiary material, it kicks off with a glassy-eyed young man (Erwin Leder) going to a random front door and shooting a woman, point-blank. Using photos, we discover a childhood that trained him to enjoy physical abuse, which he later took out on others. Nevertheless, he's back on the streets after 10 years of 'successful' rehabilitation (yeah, right!), and Kargl is justifiably harsh on the doctors and authorities who've ignored his obvious, compulsive sadism.

There's little sympathy for this freak, who's driven to find a new victim the moment he's released. With only the most tenuous grasp on reality, his matter-of-fact voice-over checks out possible prey, recalls past cruelties, and (like it or not) sucks the viewer into his mindset. Stumbling upon a secluded house, he breaks in and waits for the owners to return, with his anticipation of the grisly possibilities coming to a boil and culminating with a grisly finale as he abuses a mother, daughter and invalid son.

While never too graphic, this instead focuses on our (unnamed) killer's obsessive prowl, accompanied by performances so naturalistic that they're hard to distinguish from reality. A major factor for the film's power is Rybczynski's camerawork, which is both gritty and surprisingly surreal—often floating alongside and around the killer, for a dreamlike POV. Without one iota of sympathy, this charts the inner workings of madness, along with the outer activities of unapologetic savagery, and takes us into a passion that few of us will (hopefully) ever endure.

THAT MOST IMPORTANT THING... LOVE [L'Important C'Est D'Aimer] (European Trash Cinema; 1975).

For his first, non-Polish production, director Andrzej Zulawski once again pushes the accepted boundaries of his subject matter, and while never as hysterical as his later POSSESSION or SZAMANKA, it's still a compelling drama of human neuroses and desires at their most unchecked. Dubbed into English and based on a novel by Christopher Frank (who later directed the steamy L'ANNEE DES MEDUSES, with Valerie Kaprisky), this is a sad and seedy glimpse into show-biz bottom-feeders.

Romy Schneider (who won a Cesar for her role) plays Nadine Chevalier, a "serious" actress who has to pay the rent by appearing in exploitative, seamy fare; while strapping Fabio Testi co-stars as Servais, an opportunistic photobug who sells dirty photos of Nadine, taken during one of her low-brow gigs. Brazenly visiting her home for more pics, the instantly smitten Servais tries to help out this washed-up actress by investing in a stage version of RICHARD III, and securing Nadine the role of Lady Anne.

This is where the real fun begins, as the incomparable Klaus Kinski shows up as the brain-fried actor who's playing King Richard. Because if anyone knows how to act like an ego-fed, babbling thespian, it's Kinski, and in one showstopping scene, he initiates (and wins) a brawl with three men, only to take off with their dates. Plus, it's worth it just to see Klaus hilariously ripping his way through sections of RICHARD III. Meanwhile, Nadine sucks as a real actress and Servais' obsession grows.

Schneider gives a deft, touching performance, catching all of Nadine's self-destructive subtleties. Testi, on the other hand, is brutishly bland, and suffers from a bad case of Christopher-Lambert-itis. Grounded in everyday emotions and characters, Zulawski still manages to twist expectations, with a full array of painfully lonely individuals, all at their breaking points, yet unable to deal with the need (and pain) of love. Struggling to maintain their dreams, no matter how deluded, he uncovers both the humanity and horror within (and tosses in some bare flesh, while he's at it). Despite its seemingly optimistic title, this is a decidedly pessimistic view of how we go about achieving it.

TERRORS FROM THE CLIT (Extreme Associates; 1999).

I rarely sit through new, hardcore-adult releases, primarily because most of them are tedious, assembly-line swill. Well, this twisted, horror-themed exception strives to be more than your usual spooge-showcase. Written and directed by "Slain Wayne" (indie filmmaker Eric Brummer), it has all of the gooey vaginal and anal action that a deviant could ask for, but it also takes off in some outlandish directions, thanks to stop-action animation of demonic creatures and the sight of a guy's dick rotting away in seconds. Think of this as the first Gumby-Horror-Porn flick.

Using a "Tales From the Crypt" framework, our over-the-top, in-drag Clit Master (Dukey Flyswatter) introduces a quintet of vile, supernatural-tinged vignettes. The first has a copulating couple visited by a critical, rubbery-masked devil ("If this were a porno movie, I'd already be hitting the fast forward button"). In "Night of the Living Head," a couple's cemetery copulation is interrupted by zombies, with pretty Kelly Dean happy to satisfy their undead lust. In the other episodes, two strippers (Lizzy Borden, Erica Lockett) attend a bachelor party and get screwed by vampires; two female lab assistants discover Dr. Freakstein's stitched-up creation and its monster member; and a pair of thieves pick up a sexy hitchhiker, fuck her and blow her brains out, with undead repercussions.

Unfortunately, there's little pay-off to any of these vignettes (except for the cum-shot, of course), and I continually wished for more clever cappers. Still, what sets this apart from most X-rated outings is its gleefully fetishistic quest to *not* appease mainstream masturbators. I just can't imagine the average bishop-flogger getting off on a woman being ass-fucked by a growling, rotted-faced zombie. Although it never totally succeeds, this TERROR is a rarity amongst '90s porn, since it boasts a refreshing auteurist sensibility as well as an unconventional, underground veneer.

LA BELLE CAPTIVE (Video Vortex; 1983).

This relatively-recent outing from French writer-director-fetishist Alain Robbe-Grillet (who earlier staked out his arthouse niche with EDEN AND AFTER and TRANS-EUROP-EXPRESS) is another dazzling, often enigmatic mind-fuck, chock full of alluring twists and gleefully artificial backdrops. Again mixing high art and cheap thrills, the end result is literate, frustratingly obtuse, yet always compelling.

Titled after Magritte's painting, and often alluding to it, Daniel Mesguich stars as Walter, a married man who encounters a beautiful blonde named Marie-Ange (sultry Gabrielle Lazure) at a local disco. Later, he rescues her from the middle of a rural road, attempts to take this injured ingenue to safety, but is instead drawn into a trap—with this "belle captive" as bait. Throughout his increasingly-paranoid adventures, supporting characters begin to turn up dead, with vampire-like wounds on their throats. Later still, Walter is informed that Marie-Ange died seven years earlier, with her spiritualist father explaining that she often reappears, and from the look of it, now has the hots for Walter. Meanwhile, Walter continues to have visions of his wife Sara (Cyrielle Claire), astride a motorcycle in leather pants.

Steeped in early-'80s culture, erotic mindgames, and dreamlike imagery, it's difficult to tell where reality begins or ends. That's particularly true with the often-undraped Marie-Ange, who's glimpsed in shifting perspective—from dancing on the beach in a transparent dress, to rolling about on a bed topless. Aided by Henri Alekan's sumptuous photography, it's no surprise that there are striking visuals aplenty, often incorporating Magritte images into the background, to accentuate this dream-logic. Co-starring CITY OF LOST CHILDREN's Daniel Emilfork as an Inspector, the script continually turns in on itself and keeps us in the dark. No surprise, it's another strange, erotic, unfathomable exercise from Robbe-Grillet, who is both unsubtle in his intentions, even as we valiantly try to decipher exactly what those intentions are.

WILD, HUNGRY AND FREE (SWV; 1970).

Starting well, but limping to a finish, this Harry Novac presentation was promoted as a biker movie off-shoot, with its ads promising "kicks" and "adventure." At least they were somewhat honest, by not promising a "story that'll keep you awake." A tale of two deadeningly free spirits, the most interesting thing about it is Gary Graver in the starring role of biker Dave. Better known behind the camera, Graver has racked up points in both drive-in and arthouse fare, working with such diametrically opposed talents as Jim Wynorski and John Cassavetes, plus directing schlock gems like THE HARD ROAD.

It begins with Barbara Caron as an odd young woman who roams a beach, finds a dead fish, cooks it, then throws it away in disgust. OK, so she isn't the brightest light on the Christmas tree. Then again, neither is the biker who rolls up onto the beach and takes her for a ride. In a cool, "what-were-they-smoking?" move, the first 25 minutes contains no dialogue, as the pair do what they do, make love when they want, and save the viewer from potentially banal banter. Accompanied by flash-forwards and editing inspired by EASY RIDER, the movie goes straight into the toilet when it turns into a standard sex 'n' sports outing. *Sports?* That's right, suddenly Gary and his pick-up enter the world of speedboat racing, with sinister folks trying to sabotage the big race. Er, excuse me—when did this turn into a Frankie & Annette movie?

When not focusing on Graver, director H.P. Edwards pads it out with ultra-dull speedboat footage and gratuitous sex scenes featuring unappealing guys and (obviously) unaroused gals. At least the story gets a slight burst of energy when lovely Monica Gayle (star of Graver's SANDRA, THE MAKING OF A WOMAN) turns up as Diana, a 19-year-old who has the hots for a lucky supporting lug. A ridiculous hodgepodge of dim script ideas, after its intriguing intro, the remainder is sustained, technically inept tedium.

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SHOCK CINEMA TALKS WITH SEXPLOITATION AUTEUR

A.C. STEPHEN a.k.a. Stephen Apostolof

Interview by M. Faust

If you're a fan of 1960s sexploitation movies, there's a good chance you first acquired that taste by renting 1965's ORGY OF THE DEAD at your local video store. Released in the 1980s by Rhino Video and widely available (heck, you can even find it at the dreaded Blockbuster!), this candy-colored confection of quibbling ghouls and undulating ecdysiasts set many a baby boomer and Gen Xer to wishing for a time machine that could take them back to a day when theaters offered triple bills of such like.

Although the Rhino box refers to it as "Ed Wood Jr.'s masterpiece of erotic horror," ORGY was only written by everyone's favorite transvestite alcoholic auteur. The producer and director was Stephen Apostolof, who under the pseudonym A. C. Stephen made thirteen more sexploitation films before hardcore forced him out of the market in 1978.

Although most of his films have been available on video in the past, the releases were usually truncated (as in the five 1960s features available on Rhino's three "Saturday Night Sleazies" tapes) and/or retitled (Private Screenings released a half dozen or so of Apostolof's 70s films in boxes that disguised them as new releases). Recently, Apostolof licensed Something Weird to distribute uncut versions of all of his available films. The series includes 12 features and a compilation tape, "The Erotic World of A. C. Stephen," featuring the short "Bachelor's Dream," trailers for all of Apostolof's films, a scene from the currently lost feature COCKTAIL WAITRESSES (1973) and footage excised from his last film, HOT ICE (1978).

Ed Wood co-scripted most of Apostolof's 1970s films — THE CLASS REUNION (1972), THE COCKTAIL WAITRESSES (1973), THE SNOW BUNNIES (1973), FUGITIVE GIRLS (1974), THE BEACH BUNNIES (1976) — and occasionally worked as an assistant director or in some other crew capacity. He even appears in a dual role in FUGITIVE GIRLS, as a garage attendant and a sheriff tracking down a quintet of prison escapees. Fans of Wood's script for the 50s girl-gang classic THE VIOLENT YEARS will recognize several scenes that Wood re-uses here.

These films also feature big juicy gobs of classic Woodian dialogue. I never get tired of watching the endlessly quotable melodrama DROP-OUT WIFE (1972), which opens with a man complimenting his lady's oral skills thusly: "Oh, you suck a good cock — remind me to buy you that horse! Don't bite, don't bite..." Or how about this classic manifesto of feminism:

> "If we dig our claws into the male hide, something's gotta give. Let me tell you something: If we put chastity belts on under our panties and threw away the keys, you can damn well be sure that every male in the world would be at out feet begging us to let 'em out of the toilet. Men! They think they're the tough ones, but you just leave 'em alone for a few nights and see how tough they *really* are. We've got to grab hold of the horse by the tail and ride with him, or at least try to tame him. And you know who I'm talking about: the male of the species!"

But while the availability of these films is a boon to Wood-o-philes, they also demonstrate how much of a mistake it is solely to credit Wood for their appeal. Despite the minuscule budgets common to the genre, Apostolof consistently turned in slick, professional looking productions. (If the budget of LADY GODIVA RIDES (1969) didn't extend to having a actual boat for an Atlantic crossing, well, why not make a joke of it as Apostolof did with a toy boat in a bathtub?) Apostolof also had a knack for casting attractive performers with at least adequate and sometimes surprisingly strong thespic abilities.

And the films Apostolof scripted without Wood's input — SUBURBIA CONFIDENTIAL (1966), MOTEL CONFIDENTIAL (1967), OFFICE LOVE IN (1968), THE COLLEGE GIRLS (1968), LADY GODIVA RIDES and THE DIVORCEE (1969) are every bit as entertaining, varying from broad comedy to the equally broad melodrama that seems to lurk in the character of Eastern Europeans from Hugo Haas to Douglas Sirk. (In the drive-in that will operate year round in the heaven I plan to go to, WRITTEN ON THE WIND will be the second feature to THE DIVORCEE, the better to compare Dorothy Malone's and Marsha Jordan's performances as tragic nymphos.)

Apostolof spoke with us recently by phone from his home in Arizona, where he has lived since his distaste for earthquakes sent him packing from Los Angeles. — *M. Faust*

SC: You were born in Bulgaria --
Stephen: Yes, but I told them to stop making such a big deal about where I was born — everybody was born somewhere. Europeans are very very concerned where everybody is coming from, but not in the states — we're all Americans here.

SC: You left Bulgaria when you were young after getting in trouble with the Communists. Did you come directly to America?
Stephen: No no no. It was a long journey. I came from Bulgaria to Turkey, from there to France, then Canada and the US.

SC: How did you get into the movie business?
Stephen: Like everything in my life, by mistake. Many many people come to Hollywood with the idea, oh boy, I'm going to become a star or a director. I came here because of the weather. If I was in Detroit I would have to work with cars. If I was in Milwaukee, I'd have to work with cheese. I was very discouraged at first, but I got work in the production department at 20th Century Fox. Then I worked for Republic, where I wrote and produced a movie called JOURNEY TO FREEDOM. [Released in 1957, JOURNEY TO FREEDOM co-starred Tor Johnson and was based on Apostolof's own adventures getting from Bulgaria to the United States.] That one I lost because I couldn't pay my bill. But by mistake I later found a 16mm print that had been made for television. But I don't own the rights to it. I produced some other films there; some of them came out and some didn't.

SC: Your next film was ORGY OF THE DEAD, with a screenplay by Ed Wood. How did you and he meet?
Stephen: Through a mutual friend, William Thompson, who was the cameraman on JOURNEY TO FREEDOM [and on most of Wood's films, as well as many other classic exploitation films as far back as the 1930s]. He said, there's this very nice guy you should meet, and he arranged a meeting. Eddie and I hit it off right away, though I was shocked by his appearance. It was at a restaurant, and the maitre d' came to my table and said, "Your date is here," and there he was, in a mini-skirt and boots, fake hair and fake breasts and a mustache. I was never exposed to that kind of thing, the cross-dressing.

SC: That had to be pretty unusual in those days, for someone to be dressed that way in public.
Stephen: Well, that's Hollywood - people would think, maybe he's coming from a set where he was shooting a picture. Hollywood is a very funny place, to say the least. He had several ideas — he was the fastest writer I ever knew in my life. I would be dictating a story to him and he'd be typing, and when I stopped he stopped — he could type faster

than I can talk, and I can talk pretty fast! The script for ORGY OF THE DEAD was originally called GHOULIES, and I liked it for three reasons. One was the script only cost $400. Second was that there was no bodily contact, which at that time was very important. It was difficult because at the time I had no idea what I could get away with [in terms of adult material], what you could show and not show. Thirdly, it was all on one set. So I said all right, I'll give it a go.

SC: For a film made almost 35 years ago it's still striking, with all those vivid colors and the costumes —

Stephen: (laughs) If you could see the screenplay I had to work with on that! I had a 38 page script to make a 90 minute film! That's why it's all girls dancing - it was the first MTV film, without me knowing it! I put up half the budget and had an investor who put up the other half. The total was less than petty cash on any film today, but I don't like to say how much — the standard answer is, "under a million." Of course that was when tickets cost $1.50, though ORGY was one of the first where tickets cost $3. I always insisted on low key light in all of my pictures, and that is one of the most difficult things to shoot. Most films are what I call television lighting — they bounce light off the back and everything is lit, it kills the double shadows. I created special shadows for black and white that you could see better than in color, the tones and half-tones that are so important.

SC: You move into distribution as well after having trouble with your distributor on ORGY. Were there particular markets you sold to?

Stephen: Primarily I was working with drive-ins down south, because they couldn't get pictures from the major studios — they weren't generating enough revenue for them, they wanted a couple thousand a week.

SC: After ORGY OF THE DEAD, you didn't use Wood again for seven years. Did you two have a falling out?

Stephen: I got pissed off at Eddie because he got drunk on ORGY, and I didn't talk to him. I called him to show him the picture, he started crying, oh, it looks so beautiful, Criswell too started crying, Oh, Poppy, you made me look so regal! I said yeah, sure, next time learn your lines! I didn't trust Eddie to deliver — he was always drunk. But I miss him, because of his typing ability! I could sit down and make a script with him in one day, for heaven's sake — I dictate and he types it and then he gives it to [Wood's wife] Kathy for corrections — he'd spell "cat" with a "K" — and we'd have a screenplay within a week. But he was too far gone for any serious consideration. The alcohol got the best part of him. I liked the guy — I felt very very sorry for him. He did stupid things, which normally I would have been very very angry about, but Eddie, ehh. There was no intent — he was so happy, he got a couple bucks for writing a paperback adaptation of ORGY OF THE DEAD, and he brings me two copies, very proud. I said, Eddie, where'd you get those stills? He said well, they were just laying here. Half my stills were gone — I had them in albums, he helped himself and that was it. He said, but they promised to return them, and of course they never did. I said, at least write something nice about the picture. For the book of SUBURBAN CONFIDENTIAL, I asked him, at least stick to the storyline. But he was desperate for money.

SC: Did you see the movie ED WOOD?

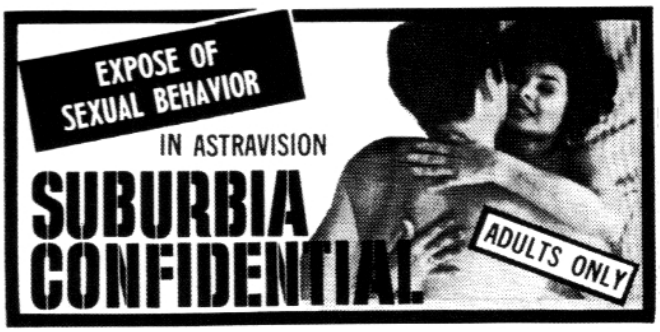
Stephen: Yes I did. It was pathetic. First of all, that was not Eddie. Eddie's personality was entirely different. The director [Tim Burton] didn't take advantage of people who knew the guy, to talk to them. There was a scene especially where Eddie meets Maila [Vampira] Nurmi, and he's on his knees begging her to be in his picture — that was not Eddie. He was a very proud man. The whole picture was confusing. The director didn't know what to do with Eddie's character. He made Eddie look like a star-struck kid. OK, Eddie was a movie struck kid, he really liked the cinema, but not to a point of stupidity, because Eddie was anything but a stupid man. The script was very shallow. If I'd directed or produced I would have concentrated more on the characters. They concentrated on the relationship with Bela Lugosi, and Bela was not a nice guy, because he was a dope addict. They made it as if Eddie and Bela were using each other, which in a sense was right. But the relationship was entirely different -- they made it as if Eddie was just supplying him with the shots. There were all kinds of funny incidents in Eddie's life which could have been put in, but they made it too pat. [Burton] doesn't understand anything that an independent filmmaker has to go through, all the improvisations that you have to do. It's very easy to have $10 million and make a film — that's the easiest thing in the world. The key is to take $200,000 and make a film that looks like $10 million. Obviously the director, whatever his name was, he never made a small one, everything is technical things, special effects. So I did not like the picture.

SC: Did you ever see any of the films that Wood himself made?

Stephen: No, I didn't. On purpose. Because the way Eddie was talking, and Eddie was a good talker, but I was always very honest with Eddie, I didn't want to see something and then have to tell him what I thought about it. Eddie's world was entirely different from yours and mine. I wake up in the morning, I look at the sun, I say, what a gorgeous day. He'd wake up in the morning and look at the sun and say, aha, the ghouls appeared in the dawn....

SC: On your other films of the 1960s, did you write the scripts under pseudonyms?

Stephen: Yes. For SUBURBIA CONFIDENTIAL, I was wondering what would be my next film. At that time the Kinsey Report was very big, it just came out. I was reading something about suburbia, and I thought of "Confidential," the big trash magazine, so I put the two together. You notice I used the name "Jason Underwood" — that was the name of my typewriter. I didn't want it to sound like a vanity production — "Produced, directed, conceived." I only used my name on two pictures, JOURNEY TO FREEDOM and HOT ICE .



SC: Though you never did hardcore, your films seemed to get gradually more explicit up to DROP-OUT WIVES (1972), after which they leveled off or got a bit less explicit.

Stephen: In DROP-OUT WIVES, there are certain scenes where I thought I went too far. I had one disadvantage, which is that with a zoom lens I don't see through the camera. So there were a couple of things that came out without me knowing it.

SC: With the exceptions of JOURNEY TO FREEDOM and ORGY OF THE DEAD, which is still available from Rhino Video, all of your films are now available from Something Weird except COCKTAIL WAITRESSES (1973). Is there a problem with that one?

Stephen: What happened is, I lost the negative. I delivered the negative to the laboratory to make a print for a sale in South America. Then I moved away from Los Angeles after the earthquake to Las Vegas and they lost track of me, and now they can't find it. There isn't even a good print available. So if you find somebody in your travels who has a print, I'll buy it back. I made thirty prints which were at various exchanges so there must be one somewhere, but so far, nothing.

SC: You were always able to find actresses who were willing to do fairly explicit nudity and were still able to handle a lot of dialogue, some of it in the case of the Ed Wood scripts pretty convoluted. Like Angela Carnon, who has the title role in DROP-OUT WIVES —

Stephen: Sometimes the nudity has nothing to do with the artistic ability of the actor or actress. Angela happened to be a very good actress, very receptive to direction. The screenplay, I changed a couple of things during shooting to fit her personality. Everybody has certain idiosyncrasies, which as a director it's my job to watch for and capture them on screen. She's another one, she disappeared too.

SC: I can't imagine an actress who wanted to have a Hollywood career doing a movie like that now. Was it acceptable in the 1970s?

Stephen: Not at that time. Nobody thought about it that way. At that time it was a film like any other film. Nudity was not that big a deal. But the majors took

a very dim view. Hollywood is a very forgiving and a very unforgiving town. I understand — I'm not sure, but I understand that Rene Bond, who's also a very good actress, tried to work in television, and everything was fine and dandy until they discovered she had done hardcore. So it was a duel standard — if it makes money for the majors, they'll do it, but they will not put their name on it. Many people don't realize how many pictures were produced by the majors that came out with an "X" rating, because of nudity or language or violence. Later on it became crazy when hardcore came in, and that's when I got out. They were making book when I was gonna make hardcore, but I said nope. All my friends were making them, but that's their department. I have my own standards, my own morality, I can go so far. I do not criticize people who went over there, that's there business. It's also my business what I make. Sex has been here, I did not invent it, and sex will be here after you and I are gone. But I don't like to overdo it — you have to keep a mystique about sex. Sex without love is animalistic, it becomes very clinical, and that's why myself I could never make the mistake and forget that.

SC: There were a lot of actors you tended to use over and over, as well as your crews —
Stephen: It was like a repertory theater. My position was this: if someone was good — and they better be good otherwise I'll kick his ass out — I don't have time to teach, I'm not UCLA. And they knew it. I was known for late hours, no nonsense. But the end result was good — everybody knew that. So if you work on a picture for me, you know the picture's going to be good. And that's important to an actor.

SC: Whatever happened to Marsha Jordan, the busty blonde who was in so many of your movies?
Stephen: Marsha is happily married, at least I hope she still is. She got married to a gentleman in Fresno. The last I heard from her was a Christmas card a long time ago. Marsha was very good to work with, very good actress, very cooperative. In THE DIVORCEE (1969), Marsha was in every scene.

SC: How about Harvey Shain, a/k/a Forman Shane, the Jack Lemmon-ish actor who's in every movie from MOTEL CONFIDENTIAL (1967) on?
Stephen: Harvey, yeah. I keep in touch with him all the time, and we get together when I'm in LA. Harvey is a good guy. I told him, Harvey, one of these days we're gonna make a picture, we're gonna take your balls and put them in gold! He's another very good actor, very reliable. I was starting to develop him to work behind the camera, to become a director, which he would have been very good as — I made him an assistant director on THE BEACH BUNNIES. He's still in the business, he's acting in television. Harvey is so talented, but he's so lazy. He's shy about promoting himself, which is very unusual for an actor. My editor Tony is Italian, he was watching Harvey on the moviola, and praising him — aha, look at how he knows how to make love, that's an Italian boy. I said Tony, shaddup, Harvey's Jewish! I'll never forget the look on his face. I'm going to surprise him — he doesn't have all the pictures he's in, so I'm going to send him the whole package. That's for his grandchildren! I'm just joking.

SC: Geez, I hope so — I don't think I'd want to see my grandfather naked in a movie.
Stephen: Well, you're not an actor. An actor will do anything. I told them how to decrease the accident rate by 80% in LA — don't put stop signs on the corners, put mirrors there, and every actor will be stopping to comb his hair.

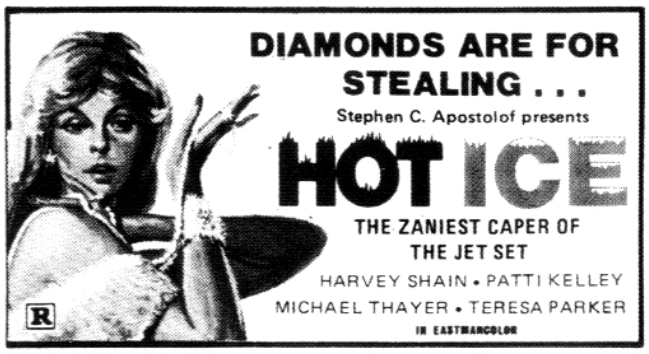
SC: Do you know whatever happened to Rene Bond, who was in four of your movies?
Stephen: I don't know. I heard different versions, that she started working for a bank. I'd have to call Rick Lutze to find out what happened to her.

SC: We were talking earlier about the photography in your films. The only one where there seems to have been a problem is FUGITIVE GIRLS, which like Ed Wood's PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE looks like it has some scenes that were intended to be day-for-night —
Stephen: I know exactly what you're referring to. Let me explain. Robert Birchall is a very very good cameraman — in fact I wish I knew where he is now, he disappeared. The laboratory printed those scenes wrong. I brought it to their attention, they promised to change it several times, but the print came out and that was it. That was one of the problems. The second problem was that the raw stock that I used, somebody opened a can in the daylight, and then instead of saying, let's throw the goddamn thing out, they put it back in and closed the lid. But in the meantime some light had got in. We went bananas trying to figure out what was happening, but it was too late. Working on a low budget, you don't have time to reshoot — I never reshot anything in my life. When done properly, day-for-night is very successful, because I cannot light the whole San Fernando Valley. The best time to shoot it is at noon, when you don't have the shadows. As a producer, you are responsible for everyone's mistakes, even if you have nothing to do with them, and you are responsible for everyone's success, even through you have nothing to do with it. This goes with the territory. Fortunately it balances itself out.

SC: There are two different versions of that film, the X-rated FUGITIVE GIRLS and a softer R version called FIVE LOOSE WOMEN. [The Something Weird tape comprises most of the footage from both versions, though it's missing a scene in which the prison escapees doff their tops to shake out the lice.] Did you plan to distribute it that way?
Stephen: Yes, I shot it in two versions, the European version and the American version. You know something funny, that's being released by MGM now in foreign markets. They got it from a line of succession, from another distributor they acquired who'd acquired it from yet another distributor. I was very surprised — I'm getting a quarterly report from MGM, I almost threw it out!

SC: I didn't realize there was still a market for older films like that in other countries.
Stephen: Well, the color is good, it has action action action, and girls in trouble or in aggressive situations always works. And there are many countries where they only charge 5 cents a seat, so they can't play the big pictures. In certain countries, especially in South America, they have the same circumstance we had here 20 years ago, the majors simply won't supply the theaters. I have seen some of those theaters, my goodness. I came out, I was afraid I was gonna catch lice. Filthy, noisy, people smoking, sitting on benches.

SC: Your last film was HOT ICE in 1978. What have you been doing since then?
Stephen: I got into foreign distribution, selling my own pictures to other countries. I spoke several languages, so I formed SCA International. Right now production is very expensive, it's uncertain where it's going. And the distribution outlets are not here. The only thing I have now is video and foreign sales, and video does not make enough money to pay the costs of a film.



SC: Are there particular countries where your films do better than others?
Stephen: There are always the key countries like England, Japan, Germany, which have a tradition of buying American films. But you sometimes have a problem with censors. Contrary to popular belief, in Europe — especially in Sweden, which everybody thinks, oh boy, that's the nation where sex is so free, well, they screw around but they don't show it on TV. Some of those countries have very very tough censorship boards that tell you what you can and cannot see.

SC: Have you ever considered making another film?
Stephen: Yes yes yes. I have several scripts all ready to go. But budgets are so high... Ω

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CHOSEN SURVIVORS *1974* Eleven people are chosen by the government's computer to survive a nuclear war. The chosen survivors are hidden miles beneath the surface of the earth not realizing they are actually human specimens under observation. Their lives become threatened by thousands of vampire bats that are unleashed in the underground complex. This film has disappeared and other than it's initial theatrical run, it remains unseen. We located an ultra-rare print in Spain. In Spanish.

DANDELIONS aka PUSTEBLUME 1974 Rutger Hauer stars in this sleazy film by Adrien Hoven. Rutger forces a woman to strip at gunpoint; initiates sex with other women then leaves them; fucks a woman hanging off the edge of a building. His self-destructive nature leads to murder. Tons of nudity. Uncut print.

BARE BREASTED COUNTESS 1973 Jess Franco, Lina Romay - XXX version in English - A countess sucks blood as well as other things. This widescreen print was compiled from 3 alternate prints making this the longest in existence Contains a supplemental section with alternate versions of scenes.

PUSSY TALK The story of a girl and her talking vagina. She meets a guy with a talking penis. Her pussy starts having a conversation with his cock. Directed by Claude Mulot. Letterboxed in French - Ultra-rare XXX version.

NINE LIVES OF A WET PUSSYCAT 1977 Abel (Bad Lieutenant) Ferrara directs and stars in this XXX Blaxploitation film.

JUSTINE DE SADE Claude Pierson's adaptation starring Alice Arno. Wall-to-wall sleaze, sex and sadism. In French with English subtitles.

VIVA LA MUERTE 1971 A very strange film filled with surreal and symbolic sequences. Played against a backdrop of torture and death. A young boy who has incest fantasies finds people around him abducted and killed. In French or German.

SEXO SANGRIENTO (BLOODTHIRSTY SEX) 1981 Super-rare! 3 lesbians go to an old castle and have sex whenever the opportunity arises. Someone is killing the girls one-by-one and leaving their naked bloody bodies. In Spanish.

ILSA HAREM KEEPER OF THE OIL SHEIKS 1976 – uncut version contains all the sex and violence cut from the other versions.

EROTIC NIGHTS OF THE LIVING DEAD 1979 Exclusive uncut XXX Joe D'Amato - subtitled by Video Vortex - gory, rotting flesh eating zombies, cannibalism, sex, Laura Gemser

ANGEL ABOVE, DEVIL BELOW – XXX – A girl finds her pussy is possessed by Satan. It speaks in a demonic voice and makes her have sex.

SEXOMANIA A woman obsessed with sex relates her sexual experiences. As a teen, her naked body is smothered by old ladies. Her mother masturbates while watching her have sex. An old woman takes off her clothes and checks her virginity by inserting a finger. The strange editing gives some scenes a psychedelic quality. In Greek.

LA BELLE CAPTIVE 1983 Alain Robbe-Grillet's sleazy surrealistic film. Easily as artistic and strange as anything by David Lynch. Highly recommended for fans of artistic sleaze. Now SUBTITLED and in beautiful quality for the first time!

BLACK EMANUELLE 1975 Extremely rare XXX version. Laura Gemser's first Emanuelle role.

SCHOOLGIRL REPORT 4: CAMPUS SWINGERS 1974 Part of the infamous Schoolgirl-Report films directed by Ernst Hofbauer. Rare English print. Schoolgirls seduce their teachers; have sex with their doctors; take showers; have a gang-bang; become prostitutes etc. Lots of nudity.

STORY OF O 1976 Uncut controversial classic more complete than the English prints. The beautiful O is taken by her boyfriend, Rene, to a bizarre retreat, where she is trained in sexual perversion. Rene discharges a personal debt by transferring possession of O to his step-brother, Sir Stephen... Beautifully filmed. Big Budget. Starring Udo Kier. Letterboxed. In French

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FILMFLOTSAM

READERS' RECOMMENDATIONS

Note: Please query me with your ideas before sending in completed reviews.

GERARD ALEXANDER; Australia.

FLYING HIGH (1978). Wow, what a great idea for a TV series. THE LOVE BOAT in the Sky! Let's see. First you get some fashionably cute but charm deficient actresses like Kathryn Witt, Pat Klous and Connie Sellecca to play wannabe stewardesses. Now, they all come from different backgrounds, just to broaden viewer identification. So you got Marcie, the tractor driver; Pam, the long suffering working class daughter of an extended family; and Lisa, horse riding member of the jet-set, who wants to work for a change. Add Marcia Wallace as their goofy (but caring) trainer and what have you got? Ninety minutes of video oblivion. Director Peter Hunt's by-the-book presentation insures that there will be no surprises. Jim Hutton, too old to appear in any more LOVE BUG films for Disney is cast as a love interest. For extra laughs, he plays a divorcee who's scared of flying. Bail out on this pic (or its subsequent short lived series) before the ripcord of its wit strangles you.

THE BUSY BODY (1967). William Castle was responsible for gimmick films such as THE HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL (in EMERGO) and THE TINGLER (in PERCEPTO) but I'm afraid this useless comedy must have been shot in LAME-O. SEE!! Comic genius Sid Caesar as a schmuck in a crime syndicate promoted by his boss, Robert Ryan, to teach his fellows how to dress smart. CRINGE!! As a gangster's body is buried along with his suit containing a million bucks in the lining. SPIN!! At Richard Pryor, in his first film role, as the detective who interrogates all. BARF!! As Dom DeLuise explains how he doesn't enjoy being a mortician as much as hairdressing. This is a movie that rolls along with the speed of a three legged turtle and is just as funny. Luckily for Castle, he also produced ROSEMARY'S BABY that year, nicely obfuscating this celluloid atrocity in his career.

KLEINHOFF HOTEL (1977). "There are red cunts, black cunts, acrylic cunts; cunts that castrate you, cunts that swallow you alive..." That's part of the litany spouted by Bruce Robinson as Karl, the Red Army terrorist hiding from the authorities at the Kleinhoff Hotel in West Germany. His next door neighbor, Pascal, played by Corinne Clery (STORY OF O), is so intrigued by his words that she decides to get involved in his life, or at least his pants. She's only staying at the hotel because her flight to her native Paris was canceled, but, sure as we know our EuroTrash clichés, she must see this relationship to its predictable end. Director Carlo Lizzani tries to create an atmosphere of doom happening but can only achieve an air of dump. Even the inevitable sex scenes are shot without much gusto, leading me to wonder who this film was intended for. I recommend that you check out of this hotel before the tedium sets in.

BLINDED BY THE LIGHT (1980). TICKET TO HEAVEN (1981) and SPLIT IMAGE (1982) were two powerful, convincing films dealing with the horrors of Cult brainwashing and the deprogramming required to bring members back into the real world. This telemovie however, is a good argument for staying in places like Camp Mercy, as the occupants there aren't bombarded with crap like this. Directed and Photographed by John Alonzo (who had photographed CHINATOWN in '74 and went back to that gig in '83 with SCARFACE), this prime time fiasco teeters on the edge of ridicule and then falls straight in. Kristy McNichol stars as Janet, whose brother David (portrayed by her real life bro James Vincent McNichol) is a member of The Light of Salvation, a traditional Jim Jones type religious group. A commando raid on their base, Camp Mercy, rescues David's friend from the cult, and poor Janet is confused. She doesn't think it's right to kidnap people and, after all, it's just a church group right? There's also an inside agent at the camp, who, in between singing off-key renditions of Dylan songs, plots the eventual downfall of the group. The gray suited guru known only as Father appears, but lets his underlings rant at the minions, preferring to sit at his throne. Just in case this film is starting to sound like fun, let me warn you that there are many tear flooded scenes to burden your passage through this epic. James McNichol plays his role on permanent Valium, even after he's out of the sect. Kristy went on to appear in the much more meaty WHITE DOG.

MATT GLASSON; Hellgate, NY.

DON'T TORTURE A DUCKLING [Non Si Sevizia un Paperino] (1972). Lucio Fulci's justifiably celebrated zombie epics have recently wormed their way deep into the hearts of gorehounds from coast to coast with re-releases of THE BEYOND and ZOMBIE. But, in my book, the late director's greatest contribution to the world of twisted Italian cinema remains this relatively obscure giallo oddity. Forever faithful to the unsavory, Fulci sets his mystery in a remote and provincial Sicilian village, where one by one, several trouble-making, chain-smoking adolescents start to get snuffed off by some local crazy. As the kiddie body count laps up, so do the red-herrings and unusual suspects. Because of the oddball assortment of characters -- very few of whom are not without suspicion, the mystery of the story is a well-kept secret until the very end. The ending, itself, is an astounding feat of brilliance in its blend of upbeat Hallmark music, haunting voice-over and perverse (as in beautifully grotesque) retribution. Such sublime genius, this powerhouse finale kept me smiling for days afterward. All sick kicks aside, though, what sticks as most disquieting about the film is its frank and unnerving handling of the murders themselves (we never get to see a 12-year-old strangled in loving close-up from the PC-cows in Hollywood), as well as its commitment to the idea that these children don't have much of a chance in this world of preoccupied adults who are either too selfish or insane to really care for them. Outside of some far-fetched detective work and its laughably naive perception of marijuana, this is Italian cinema at its most dynamic. Captivating, unsettling and thoroughly twisted.

PHENOMENAL AND THE TREASURE OF TUTANKHAMEN [Fenomenal e Tesoro di Tutankamen] (1967). In the tradition of Italian knock-offs of Italian gems comes an early effort from the director of CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST and JUNGLE HOLOCAUST. Using the rock-solid American moniker

Roger Rockfeller, Ruggero Deodato brings us an action adventure in the tradition of the brilliant and dazzling DIABOLIK! by Mario Bava, only without the brilliance and dazzle. From the go-get, indications are that we're in for a good time while some drug smugglers sailing the ocean are suddenly apprehended by the riveting PHENOMENAL, who wears all black (like Diabolik), but puts a black sock(!) over his head to conceal his identity. The pseudo-psychedelic rock groove gets going during the title music with enthusiastic chants in broken English of "Phenom-Phenomenal!" We are then subject to a hilarious robbery in an art museum which the burglars execute by laughing maniacally through the security intercoms and cold-cocking the guards as they fumble about. Turns out the robbers are undercover cops hired to show how poor and incompetent the security is guarding the much-coveted treasure of Tutankamen. Too bad, because the villains of this uninspired escapade are much more of a yawn than these cackling henchmen. Hence, the 'real' plot kicks in as the head of Tutankamen gets lifted from the gallery and boring characters speak boring dialogue and exchange mysterious, but boring glances with one another. But who stole the treasure? And what does PHENOMENAL want? And who the hell is PHENOMENAL? I'm sure by the end, you won't care, if you hadn't figured it out from the obscure (and boring) clues scattered throughout. Mr. Rockfeller could have afforded to pick up the pace a bit by excising half of the dialogue and cursory romantic interest (adding some gut-chomping and rape with a stone dildo might have helped, too). By trying to sell PHENOMENAL with a soporific hero and a villain that is far from interesting, it's no wonder that PHENOMENAL was quickly relegated to the lore of forgotten superhero losers.

HYSTERICAL! (1983). What do you get when you cross the Marx Brothers with the Zucker Brothers? Of course, we get the readily forgotten Hudson Brothers, who, at one time, had their own variety-style TV show of the day. Well, HYSTERICAL! is their one and (thankfully) only foray into feature filmmaking. If there were ever an idea that only got green-lighted after getting the room of studio-execs stoned off their ass, this would be it. The buffoonery compendium of a plot concerns a northern coastal town that is haunted by a curse placed by the lighthouse keeper's mistress (Julie Newmar) exactly 100 years ago (by 1983 standards). This brings the long dead lighthouse keeper (gargantuan Richard Kiel) back from the dead (hand-lantern in tow) to start killing off the local townsfolk, which turns them into zombies with turtleneck sweaters who can only say, "What difference does it make." Enter two of the three Hudson Brothers, who are Indiana Jones-type adventurists brought in to save the town from the pending doom. The third Hudson plays a sleaze-writer who moves into the old lighthouse and begins to get possessed by the keeper's ethereal mistress. Featuring a bravado cast of '70's has-beens (including the Hudson Brothers), Clint Walker, Robert Donner, a post-HEE-HAW Gary Owens, Bud Cort, Murray Hamilton (reprising his role as 'Town Mayor' from JAWS) all join the ranks to hammer another nail in their Hollywood coffins. The movie is packed to the gills with jokes and movie-spoofs which range from stupid-funny to embarrassing-stupid. At the least, they tried way too hard making frivolous mock and ended up making fools of themselves and everyone else bold enough to grace the camera. Still, with its unique cast and endless line of insipid gags, the film is moderately enjoyable for its excesses. It is toward the end, however, when the film becomes a free-for-all mug fest do the Hudson Brothers become painfully unfunny as they desperately grimace to the camera and spontaneously break out into song ("Music confuses zombies!" they limply explain). I guess they figured it was their one chance to give it their all, and so they did - way too much. Annoying critics and audience alike, HYSTERICAL! understandably drew a damp and dark curtain over the Hudson Brother's fleeting limelight.

TOM FITZGERALD; SF, CA.

THE LORD OF THE UNIVERSE (1974). A look into the sleazy, pathetic phenomenon of 70's guru worship, this documentary covers Guru Mahara Ji and the stunning array of losers, burnouts, and flakes who worshipped him. From Jesus Freak-types to miserable housewives, all gave up everything and naively followed this shallow, inarticulate, greasy, fat-faced, Hawaiian Punch-drinking teenage messiah. The docu's main focus is on his cult's big gathering at what he claims is the holiest place on earth — The Houston Astrodome! Entertainment for this "the most significant event in the history of the universe" consisted of the guru's brother crooning in a cornea-damaging, sequined outfit and a cheezy rock band doing a Vegas-y cover of "Satisfaction." His cult was quite fanatical, as evidenced when a Yippie-like freak throws a pie in Mahara Ji's face. The guru's zombies beat the prankster so badly, he had to have a 4 inch plate put in his skull. One drone quips, "If I was there, I'd have slit his throat on the spot." The last word is left to Abbie Hoffman, whose sarcastic commentary is heard throughout, "If this guy is God, he's the God the United States of America deserves."

BUNNY O'HARE (1971). Another "with it" embarrassment starring aging Hollywood celebrities. Bette Davis plays Bunny, an elderly widow who's just been evicted from her house. Homeless, she teams up with ex-con Ernest Borgnine and they decide to rob banks disguised as hippies. Their getaway is a motorcycle and they ride around with blaring biker-rock instrumentals like "Put a Little Lead in your Zeppelin." It's as unfunny as it sounds and the two actors are a mismatched combo. They look pretty hilarious though, he with a fake beard she with a long, blonde wig and big, floppy hat. John Astin and Jack Cassidy also star. Coming at the end of their youth-oriented drug and biker period, AIP released this forgotten stinker.

RIVALS (1972). Precocious pre-teen Jamie has an unhealthy relationship with his neurotic mother in the obsessive, psychoanalytical world of Uptown Manhattan. This momma's boy is intellectually grown up, but emotionally he's in bad shape. Dad has recently died and mom's just starting to date, but Jamie feels threatened and scares off her suitors. She winds up marrying a fun-loving guy who doesn't know what he's in for. Jamie resents him and begins plotting against their relationship. A subtle unease lies under the surface throughout and creepy hints of an Oedipal theme are present. For example, when he eavesdrops on mom discussing how childbirth was a sexual experience for her and possibly even the baby. Despite all this despair, there are some fun moments -- Jamie's SESAME STREET-like student film with kids running around in Nixon and JFK masks and a party around NYC with hippies, street musicians, and a rabbi all passing a joint around. The lightness of these earlier scenes give way to ever increasing brittle conflict and finally tragedy. Directed by Krishna Shah (who?) it stars stand-up comic Robert Klein, in an early role, and Scott Jacoby who later portrayed a teen psycho in the TV movie BAD RONALD.

QUEENS OF EVIL [Il Delitto Del Diavolo] (1970). Here's a rarity for Italian horror — an adult fairy tale, an allegorical fable of the counterculture and the establishment's backlash. Ray Lovelock, who also warbles the Dylanesque theme song, stars as David the archetypal dropout motorcycling aimlessly around the Italian countryside. He encounters the Devil disguised as a rich businessman. They argue philo

sophically about modern times with the Devil lamenting the loss of sexual guilt. In the middle of some spooky woods, David comes across the groovy, luxurious pad of three witchy Euro-babes. Each take turns seducing him. He has a dream in which the girls turn menacing, one shooting him with a gun coming from between her legs. Are they three "Eves" working for the Devil to tempt this hippie "Adam" into monogamy and snuff the free love ideals he represents? Does flower power win out in the end? Find out in this atmospheric, stylish and sexy fantasy. Not really a horror flick, but there is one surprising, slashing scene of bloodletting.

AUTOPSY (1973). This Spanish mondo oddity starts off with actual My Lai massacre footage intercut with fake scenes of a reporter pondering the devastation around him. Back home in Spain, he interviews a Krishna, a daredevil, a bullfighter, a scientist and a philosopher about their thoughts on death. He wants to document an autopsy to force people to face their own mortality. He feels everybody's "living life like a holiday," keeping death, pain and war distant from their consciousness. To photograph the procedure he brings a goofball friend, who gets queasy and gives the flick some "comic" relief. Brains and guts are graphically shown, as doctors cut up a real corpse. Between these gruesome scenes, are fictional flashbacks set up to look like moments from this actual dead guy's life in which an actor portrays him as a famous soccer player. In the end, the dorky shutter bug winds up freaking out in a discotheque, seeing autopsy footage flashing in the strobe lights. This is a revelation for him and he feels truly alive for the first time in his life!

BLACK RODEO (1972). A strange artifact, this is the WATTSTAX-like documentary of a rodeo held around Harlem in 1971. The event was meant to create awareness for the black community of the role they played in the Wild West. It's narrated by Spaghetti Western veteran Woody Strode who also discusses the forgotten history of the Black Cowboy. Muhammed Ali was there, clowning around with some quick-draw gunslingers and boasting to a horse with his "I'm the Greatest!" schtick. As confused and curious spectators look on, Brothers bust bronco, rope cattle, wrestle steers and ride bulls. I wonder what inner city audiences thought of this one.

MICHAEL HELMS; Australia.

MASLIN BEACH (1996). While it could be argued that time stands still in many parts of the world, far from Australia's filmmaking capitals in sunny downtown Adelaide (alright they do have a Dolby studio and Rolf de Heer does hang out there) the 1960s have just arrived as evidenced by the recent appearance of MASLIN BEACH, an indie production that's more like a well-made nudist camp movie with good jokes than anything else. If you can accept that amazing contradiction in terms you'll find this a pretty clever debut for first-time feature filmmaker Wayne Groom who shaves wardrobe costs by keeping most of his cast buck naked as he hustles his camera through a day on a secluded but well populated nudist beach. Basically skit oriented, the flick is held together by two twentysomethings and their disintegrating relationship (LOVE AND OTHER CATASTROPHES in the raw?). Bumbling but likable idiot Simon doubts his future with Marcie and then spends too much time hanging out with an ice cream man who's more interested in his own farts than he is in practicing his trade. Incidentally, the ice cream man is played by one Gary Waddell, who besides bearing more than a passing resemblance to George Young, elder brother of AC-DC's Angus, was last seen trying to score in the mid-'70s, shot-in-Melbourne drug classic PURE SHIT and has been apparently missing ever since. Meanwhile, we get incidental laughs from a series of naked funsters including a woman graphically describing the medical problems encountered when her bastard husband decided to superglue his dick inside her, yuppie mobile phone fun, and a pathetic old sleazebag attempting to coerce some sucky fucky out of our sexy heroine. Booger jokes and a quote from Henry Miller are thrown in for good measure along with a cheesy Farfisa organ and horn score. Speaking of which, as Marcie and Simon bump heads on the way to the beach, the film contrasts their differences with an opening shot that pulls back to linger wistfully on an obviously loving and naked couple making full use of an open air shower. The Fabio-like buffed stud also happens to reveal half a mong (i.e. semi-erect cock) as he gently rubs down his partner's back. This is just the first sample of full frontal nudity (of both sexes) on show throughout MASLIN BEACH and what separates its flesh display from an ocean of previous samples is that it's provided by actors who seem so comfortable with the rampant nakiddity that they actually produce acting performances. It's definitely not like watching porn stars mechanically exhibit themselves or sun-loving amateurs simply being enthusiastic for the camera. I don't know whether it's something in the water, the location or director Groom's obvious rapport with his cast but there's a, dare I say it, naturalism here that makes MASLIN BEACH highly enjoyable and eminently viewable. It played theatrically in its hometown but premiered nationally on network TV! Better than getting sand up your arse!

BEYOND REASON (1970). In between ON THE BEACH and MAD MAX came this no budget and little seen post-holocaust drama produced in the bowels of several Melbourne buildings. A potential nuclear blast (later represented by objects falling off the wall and cast members leaping to the floor) drives two dozen inmates of an asylum and three medical staff into a seemingly spacious bunker stocked with a limited amount of food and tranquilizers. An obviously unhinged female patient locks the heavy circular door to the complex and then promptly forgets the combination. Colleagues and fellow inmates who remain trapped outside begin banging on the door, often overriding the throbbing bass and godawful organ noodlings that make up the bulk of the 'composed' music soundtrack. Besides the definite non-hit theme song that plays under the opening credits and closes the show (with lyrics provided by one Ollie Ven Skevics who, twenty years later, produced and co-directed HOUSEBOAT HORROR), the only rhyme to the inclusion of music here seems to be just to fill any spots that don't contain dialogue. And that's apparent within the first five minutes! Anyway, after a less than sensational introduction, BEYOND REASON then spends its time documenting the physical and psychological meltdowns of the already unstable two dozen who did make it through the door. Beady faced and permanently distracted administrator Frank takes charge and immediately tries to maintain the peace by dosing anyone who comes near him. As you might expect the first person through his door rips off her top and throws herself into his arms. Disdainfully Frank pushes her out of the room sniping that Sister will be bringing her tablets shortly. "It wasn't medicine I was after," she mouths disgustedly. Things rapidly deteriorate while Frank manages further snappy banter like, "Please, I don't want a pipe smoking humanist talking now," when faced with having to converse with his one and only ally. In the meantime the nurse has taken up with a patient who fixes a video monitor attached to an above ground camera. She looks on horrified but of course we get zilchvision. A brawl breaks out when the door girl accuses another gal's boyfriend of sweating(!). Just when it looks like ultimate fighting is about to occur, the door is unlocked and everyone stumbles out into the radiation saturated remains of the city of Melbourne. In the sharp light of day the rabble in the rubble utilize some sort of collective consciousness and stone (and brick) Frank for his troubles. Finito... That BEYOND REASON has so far avoided any sort of video release anywhere in the world probably says a lot more about it than anything else. And that's even without mentioning it's beautiful futurist aesthetic which runs to lots of silver paint (the suppliers are mentioned in the opening credits, there are no closing credits), tubular air ducts, space age bright orange molded plastic chairs, and all around minimalist approach. Mostly it just looks and sounds awful like a poverty row serial with arthouse pretensions. It's probably also instructive to mention the presence of a psychiatric consultant looming

large in the credits, but far be it from me to speculate here on his particular contribution to the direction of the film, suffice to say an authentic level of psychosis is sustained throughout. Producer-director Giorgio Mangiamele also shot BEYOND REASON before disappearing forever which might explain away some limitations along with the fact that Australia didn't really possess a film industry at this point in time. Inexplicably BEYOND REASON was picked up by Columbia for worldwide distribution (in Australia it played on a double bill with a Hayley Mills movie!?). This factor alone elevates it from mere curio to another realm altogether.

ANDREW COPP; Dayton, Ohio.

THE KILLING OF SATAN (1974). WOW! This is one bizarre ass movie! There is no discernible reason this movie should work, but it does. This Indonesian, pro-Christian, fantasy, horror flick has it all and then some; lots of gore, women that turn into snakes (I've known a few of those in my time), nekkid babes, and best of all, a hilarious red underwear wearing Satan that turns into a much fatter and older actor between cuts! Whew! I almost forgot the handy hurricane that whips up during the final act that seemed to really be happening so they just shot it and wedged it into the whacked-out story. Oh yeah, God shows up too! He has a walk-on to give the hero a magic staff to whoop the devil's ass with. This movie represents everything that makes cult viewing worthwhile!

ROAD TO EDEN (19—). Words like "life-affirming" and "breathtaking" are not usually associated with films about morgue attendants and their daily duties. But they are the only way to adequately describe this amazing film. It is a documentary that follows a middle-age Spanish Morgue worker through his daily life. We meet his family, watch him work and hear his philosophy on life. But instead of the expected bitter and forlorn attitude one would expect, we get a wise man who has become fully in touch with life through his contact with the dying and the dead. Spending his days tending to a part of the life process that most of us will never see has given him (and this film) a refreshing view of life and all it has to offer. Thankfully we are allowed in for the journey. This is a hard film to find, I know Nacho (AFTERMATH) Cerda's Waken Films handles it in Spain, which is the video I saw it from.

EXHAUSTED (1981). Supposedly a documentary on the life and times of John Holmes, this is instead, a tremendous soliloquy to the man and his member. Directed by Shawna Grant (who obviously had a huge love jones for the big log, uh, lug) at the height of their popularity, we see the man in action at work, amongst snippets of him explaining the popularity of smut. He is surprisingly well spoken, even if he sounds a bit ridiculous at times. The film is raucously entertaining even if it avoids the uglier sides of the industry. Instead we get a portrait of the late 70's porn world as fun, frolicking and lots of good old fucking.

MIKE SULLIVAN; Mountaintop, PA.

E.T. OR NOT TO E.T. (198?). Many people feel that the Philippines makes the most awful films in the world. I disagree. South America makes the worst films in the world. South American films are usually filled with fat guys performing unfunny slapstick sandwiched in between rotten musical numbers. Well, this film has all the above things I mentioned, but this time a cheesy E.T. puppet is along for the ride. The movie is not in English so it's hard to pinpoint what it's about. Is it about a group of untalented comedians (one of which looks alarmingly like Charles Manson) trying to get their big break? Is it about a Benny Hill wannabe trying to impress two showgirls? Or is it about E.T. trying to get away from some vague CIA types? Does it really fucking matter? But the film does have its moments, such as our puffy hero mewing like a cat to find E.T., a Dick Miller lookalike who pointlessly lurks around a restaurant, and E.T. himself who sometimes is a midget in a costume for long shots and a puppet in close-ups. The funny thing is the costume and the puppet look totally different and the shots don't match up. But if you love third world rip-offs of Spielberg films, you'll adore this South American excretion.

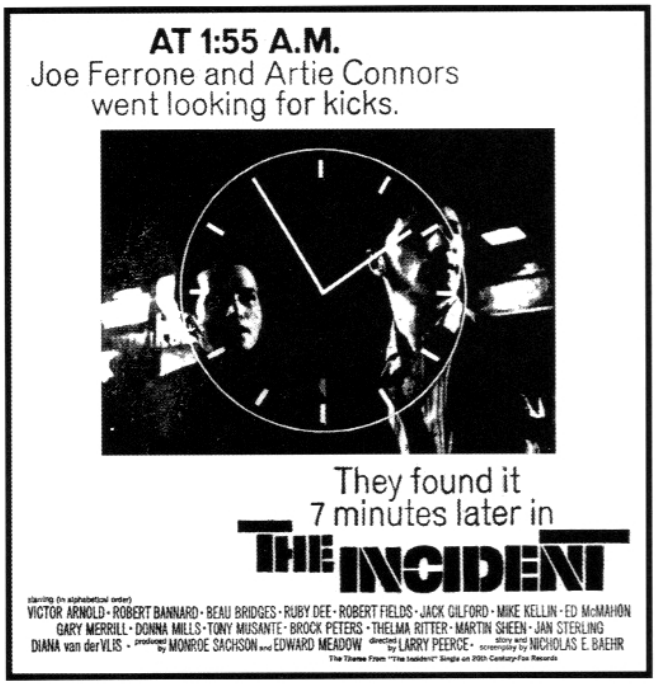
DR.CALIGARI (1989). Stephen Sayadian is pretty well known for his cult hit CAFE FLESH. But when he tried to duplicate that movie's popularity with this CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI remake he fell flat on his ass. But what a movie it is! A woman gets her wrist slit by a guy in a kewpi doll mask, there's a giant tongue, a penis arm, Fox Harris in drag acting like Marilyn Monroe and seen later on in the movie eating out the Xena-like Dr. Caligari, everyone wears either pink or yellow clothes, there's a bleeding birthday cake, and an old lady eating testicles. Let's not forget the pretentious dialogue ("My feelings are like filthy prayers I want to scream in your face.") and the theatrical (over) acting. This film is like a dramatic FORBIDDEN ZONE.

MILES WOOD; Hong Kong.

RAPED BY AN ANGEL 4: THE RAPER'S UNION (1999). Wong Jing rounds off this series, which began back in 1993, and was resuscitated by him 5 years later, with a self-proclaimed "male fantasy," though, perhaps that should read "rape fantasy." Suki Kwan makes for an unconvincing novelist, apparently suffering from writer's block, continually being spied on and lusted after by her rich neighbor (Ben Ng), who teams up with two other rapists whose escape from jail he engineers. In the way of Ng's plans for Kwan is her boyfriend (Nick Chueng), who just happens to be the officer trying to track down the rapists. It's a trademark of Wong Jing to mix violence and humor in the most unlikely ways, but here he oversteps the mark, with rape scenes acting as pure titillation. Despite the fact that the film avoids getting a Cat 3 rating (by not showing any below-the waist nudity), it's offensive in the extreme. The sexy and shapely Athena Chu, whose presence accounted for the popularity of the first sequel, repeats her role, but has little screen-time, and leaves the other actresses to do the "sexy stuff," but none of them make much impression. Anthony Wong provides the only genuinely amusing moments (even in this context, it's impossible not to laugh!) as a reformed abductor of women, now earning his living as a projectionist at a porno house, which not only helps him control his sex drive but also allows him to learn English -- "I'm coming!"

FRIVOLOUS LOLA (1998). Anna Ammirati takes the title role as a spirited young thing whose straight-laced fiancee refuses to go the whole hog before their impending wedding (he prefers to dream of having his own successful bakery!) which continually frustrates her and leads her to flirt with whatever males happen to be around. Tinto Brass, as you'd expect, provides some luscious visuals, occasionally reminiscent of Borowczyk — though it's difficult to tell if the anachronistic period details are intentional or not — but after a while the soft-focus photography, the continual use of filters and smoke to diffuse the image, and even the endless shots of Ammirati's derriere (constantly revealed as her skirt is blown up by the wind as rides round town on her bike) get a little tiresome. The English-dubbing perhaps broadens the comedy even more than in the original, with Patrick Mower hamming it up somewhat as the man who may or may not be Lola's father...though that doesn't stop his carnal desire for her!

HENTAI KASOKU (1984). Masayuki Suo, whose SHALL WE DANCE? was a hit both in Asia and in the arthouses of America made his directorial debut with this porno flick about a "sexually abnormal family" (as the title translates). The father is continually longing for his late wife, while his daughter takes up a job as hostess in a sex sauna, where her first customer turns out to be her newly married elder brother. The film is explicit, with several sex scenes appearing at regular intervals including a bout of S&M complete with whipping and urination, but it's all pretty unerotic, with Suo seemingly more concerned with sending up the style of Yasujiro Ozu, which may be amusing for a while but if you find TOKYO STORY tedious, then even though it runs for only an hour, you'll probably have the same reaction here.



THE INCIDENT (1967). Tony Musante and Martin Sheen both made their film debuts as a couple of punks who terrorize a carload of subway passengers one night, and both give powerful, scary performances in what began life as an indie but was completed thanks to financing from Fox. The passengers are broad stereotypes — an angry anti-white black guy (Brock Peters) and his wife, a homosexual (Robert Fields), a virginal blonde (Donna Mills) trying to fend off the gropes of her low-grade boyfriend (Victor Arnold), etc. — and consequently the film feels dated and rather too schematic, but it's still an intense white-knuckle ride, and a definite warning of what may happen if you decide to take the subway at 2 in the morning. No wonder the NYC Transit Authority refused to let director Larry Peerce shoot on an actual train!

THE CONMAN (1999). Or "God of Gamblers 1999," if you go by the Chinese title, as Wong Jing revives the gambling genre that he inaugurated a decade earlier. Career gambler Andy Lau, whose creed is that the only way to win is to cheat — to the extent that he even cheats on his wife — finds his life collapsing around him one night when not only is his infidelity exposed but he is also discovered with an ace up his sleeve (actually a bug in his spectacles), and when he fatally stabs his opponent in the ensuing ruckus, he finds himself sentenced to five years in prison. Deciding to use his "time" for the betterment of himself, he works out sure methods of winning on the horses, which he then starts putting into practice on his release. Jing generally gives the proceedings a far more downbeat and realistic feel than in previous installments, but consequently, this isn't half as much fun as having Stephen Chiau transported back in time in GOG3: BACK TO SHANGHAI or Chow Yun-Fat seeking revenge for his wife's killing in the action-packed GOD OF GAMBLERS RETURNS. That is, until the completely absurd finale when Lau must try to convince his opponent that Brazil defeat France in the 1998 World Cup. Lau is pretty dull, giving little depth to his role, while Athena Chu is given little to do but try and look sexy in tight-fitting t-shirts, and the most memorable moments are pretty incidental send-ups of Hong Kong television commercials, jokes which will be lost on non-local audiences.

THE SUSPECT (1998). Ringo Lam's second film after his brief but unhappy flirtation with Hollywood (the Van Damme vehicle MAXIMUM RISK). Don Lee (Louis Koo) is released from jail after his life sentence for the assassination of a drug lord is cut short by governmental changes. Vowing to go straight, he naturally immediately finds himself set-up as the fall guy for the killing of a presidential candidate, but he manages to flee, while abducting a female reporter (Ada Choi) as hostage. In order to prove his innocence, aided by the foreign legion (led by Ray Lui) he goes back to HK to track down the real killer, former ally and friend Max (Julien Cheng). Mixing some impressive large-scale action set-pieces with a touch political intrigue, Lam (as in the earlier FULL CONTACT) also lends a homoeroticism to the male relationships, most significantly that between Simon Yam's ruthless schemer (who is the mastermind behind the whole plot) and Cheng's slightly fey killer-for-hire. Despite the amount of bloodshed, the film never trivializes the deaths of even minor characters; it's generally gripping stuff and good to see Lam back on form on familiar turf.

THE APPOINTMENT (1969). Now here's a weird concept: Director Sidney Lumet, best known for his urban police dramas such as SERPICO, takes a stab at making a European art movie. A businessman (Omar Sharif) working in Rome becomes obsessed with a mysterious woman (Anouk Aimee) whom his friend was engaged to, but he cannot put out of his mind the reason for their separation -- she is suspected of being a high-class prostitute. Even after they fall in love and get married, the thought haunts him, and he makes an arrangement with an antique dealer-cum-madam (Lotte Lenya) which he believes will lead to exposing her dark side. Despite some attractive views of Italy courtesy of cinematographer Carlo di Palma, the film fails to cast the same spell over the viewer that Aimee does over Sharif's character, and at best is a curiosity that will be best remembered for John Barry's haunting theme music.

ADAM GROVES; Manhattan Beach, CA.

COLD DOG SOUP (1989). The best thing I can say about this one is that it could have been a lot worse. The director is 80's hack Alan Metter (BACK TO SCHOOL, GIRLS JUST WANNA HAVE FUN) while the source material was Stephen Dobyn's excellent 1988 novel. How could it not be trashed on its way to the screen? Surprisingly, the film isn't that bad. It does after all feature the always-watchable Randy Quaid (never mind that his character in the novel was black). Frank Whalley (you'll remember him as PULP FICTION'S Brett, who tried to "fuck Marcellus Wallace" and ended up getting shot about twelve times) isn't even bad in the lead role, as a geek forced into an AFTER HOURS-style nightmare after he stupidly agrees to bury his date's dead dog. No match for the novel, but there are a number of good moments (in particular a climactic voodoo ceremony) and...well, it could've been a lot worse!

DEADLY RUN [Mortelle Randonnee] (1982). Isabelle Adjani goes psycho! That's all you really need to know about this one, another disappointing adaptation of a great book. Here the source material is Marc Behm's brain-bursting 1980 psycho-fest THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER (thought by many to be the "inspiration" for BLACK WIDOW '87). It concerns a depressed PI who witnesses a young woman kill her husband. Rather than do anything about it, our few-bricks-shy-a-load hero simply follows what turns out to be an enthusiastic serial killer from one murder to the next, even surreptitiously helping to dispose of the bodies on occasion. Behm (who penned the Burt I. Gordon anti-classic THE MAD BOMBER and many other films) originally wrote this as a screenplay, and in the right hands I'm sure it would make a GREAT movie, but director Claude Miller isn't up to the challenge. DEADLY RUN is far too bland, conventional and leisurely paced to approach the novel's all-out insanity. Isabelle is great, though (she's the only reason to see it) and Behm's tome is currently being remade with Ewan McGregor and Ashley Judd. Let's hope they get it right this time.

THE FOOL KILLER (1967). One of Anthony Perkins' best. What seems at face value to be another hop on the PSYCHO bandwagon turns out to be something else entirely: a low budget, high style cross between HUCKLEBERRY FINN and NIGHT OF THE HUNTER. Although top billed, Perkins has what amounts to a supporting role in this nightmarish tale of a young orphan's wanderings through late-1800's South. Tony plays Guido, a disturbed Civil War vet who may or may not be the eponymous killer. He at times overdoes the "disturbed" bit (surprise!), but director Servando Gonzalez maintains a chillingly apprehensive atmosphere throughout, aided by superb black-and-white photography. Incidentally, the kid is played by future bad actor Edward Albert.

FUTURE PERFECT (1991). A fascinating example of just how dated a film can become in a few short years. This was touted in an early issue of the Film Threat Video Guide and many other publications and I'll have to admit, it seemed pretty cool at the time, fully living up to the "warning" on the video box: "Some people may think this film is too strange." How times have changed. Since Virtual Reality is now much more than an abstract concept, the storyline—two nerds construct a VR machine out of their parents' computer—seems far less believable than it did back in the dark days of '91. In the wake of NATURAL BORN KILLERS *et al*, director/cinematographer/editor Stefan

Forbes's stream-of-consciousness, multi-format style seems far less innovative. And with the EL MARIACHI-inspired flood of no-budget features, FP's scant running time (51 minutes) and severely truncated ending (evidently Forbes ran outta money) seem far less forgivable. This isn't to say it's not worth seeing. One review compared this to TOTAL RECALL and found it superior...well, no argument there!

CALMOS [a.k.a. Femmes Fatale] (1975). Here's one! HERE'S ONE!! Frogland filmmaker Bertrand Blier debuted with the kick-ass GOING PLACES in 1974, which managed to piss off nearly everyone. Unfortunately, his subsequent efforts were mostly lame middle-class sex comedies beloved by Pauline Kael. Somehow CALMOS, his second film, slipped through the cracks; that's a shame, because it's apparently one of his wildest. Get this: two guys leave their wives and meet up with other similarly disgruntled men. They form a society dedicated to debauchery and indulgence, until the wives decide to come after them, igniting a full-scale war. Our two heroes manage to escape, but somehow get shrunk down to insect size. They try to hide in a woman's vagina—unfortunately just as she's about to get fucked—and end up being crushed by a giant cock! Or at least, that's what I've heard happens. No, I haven't actually seen this very obscure flick, but then neither have you!

SEAN McELROY; Springfield, IL.
NIGHT OF THE BLOODY APES (1968). Leave it to our amigos in Mexico to deliver a double-barreled blast of scuzzy tomfoolery in their wrestling-themed horror films. As well as having what I believe to be the single greatest title in the history of cinema, Rene Cardona Jr.'s directorial debut also succeeds in touching every base of filmed unpleasantness. The result is almost freakishly entertaining. The story involves a doctor transplanting a gorilla's heart into his dying son's body, which, naturally, causes him to turn into a crazed monkey-face rapist. While the mutilated corpses pile up, the cops scour the city in search of the pajama-wearing "bloody ape." Meanwhile, the head detective's girlfriend pursues a career in (masked) pro wrestling and gives Cardona Jr. an excuse to cut to some breakneck grappling footage (or scummy footage of nude locker room frolicking) whenever things get slow. When the doctor finally captures his son and replaces the ape heart with a human one, the transformations don't stop and the carnage continues. The film hints towards a final showdown between the bloody ape and female wrestler, but for some reason that never happens, and instead it ends with a KING KONG rip-off only on a three-story building. Garishly colorful and grotesque (real-life heart surgery footage! eye gouging!), NIGHT OF THE BLOODY APES establishes a distinctive visual style that's hard not to admire. Innovative editing techniques abound—be sure to use your pause button to check out the flash frames of '68-style pop art paintings cut in between intense scenes, as well as the multitude of puzzling, unmotivated close-ups. Cardona Jr. is obviously a man of style, substance, and intelligence—where the hell is he now?

DEAD KIDS 2 [a.k.a. Strange Behavior 2] (1995). For years, I've recommended the movie DEAD KIDS to people in the mood for a sloppy horror film (vastly underrated director Michael Laughlin made the original in 1981 and the almost as good STRANGE INVADERS in 1983). Imagine my excitement when a lesser-known sequel surfaced a few years back. Set once again in Galesburg, IL, this grubby shot-on-video follow-up all but duplicates the giddy, deadpan tone of the original. This time directed by newcomer Cyrus Khazai, DEAD KIDS 2 plays less like a continuation of the original story as it does an updated remake/homage (kind of a trend lately). The hit-and-run death of a popular professor at Know College sets the plot in motion as a mysterious new scientist arrives in Galesburg, to conduct some behavioral experiments on the students. The volunteers are given hypodermic injections directly in their eyes which gradually causes them to become homicidal lunatics. In one of the more wacked-out sequences, one student is stabbed to death while some lousy garage band plays "Smells Like Teen Spirit" at half-speed on the soundtrack. The next morning, the murderer pees blood and passes out next to the urinal. As the investigating officer, Bill Clements delivers one of the most eccentric performances that I've seen in low budget video—in one scene, he brings a glass of wine to a crime scene; in another, he interrogates a suspect while shirtless. The only quibbles I have are the pacing (a few cuts here and there would vastly improve the final product) and the tidy ending which seems lifted out of a Scooby Doo episode. Still, I wish more shot-on-video flicks were made with half of the talent and intelligence that went into DEAD KIDS 2. If shot-on-video garbage were American presidents, DEAD KIDS 2 would be Abraham Lincoln.

GREG WALTERS; Tucson, AZ.
LA RENDEZVOUS EN FORET (1972). The genesis of THE BEAST by Walerian Borowczyk. Catherine Jourdan (EDEN AND AFTER) stars as the woman in a French version of the Beauty and the Beast. She encounters witches and other mythical creatures along the way. Director Alain Fleischer delivers some arty images and a little nudity from Jourdan to liven things up. Think of Louis Malle's BLACK MOON crossed with Fellini's CITY OF WOMEN, and you'll have some idea of where the movie's going. But apparently not enough to satisfy the producer, who contacted Borowczyk to shoot a new ending with a beast man. He got as far as constructing the costume before Fleischer went to court to stop any further mutilation of his film. Borowczyk, not wanting to let his costume go to waste, made his version of the same story two years later.

ANGEL AND THE WOMAN (1977). French Canadian director Gilles Carle usually directed French-language films with an arty bent, but decided to chuck that in, with this nutty hippie movie. Carole Laure, his then current girlfriend, is shot to death and then brought back to life by a commune leader, who looks like Jesus Christ. Symbolism galore here. Most of the plot revolves around their growing romance in the commune. It's here where the film almost loses its interest, but when Carle ladles on the sex scenes with Laurie, you'll sit up and take notice. Nothing hardcore mind you, but real close. She later claimed that a hardcore version was also made, but it's not evident from the print I saw.

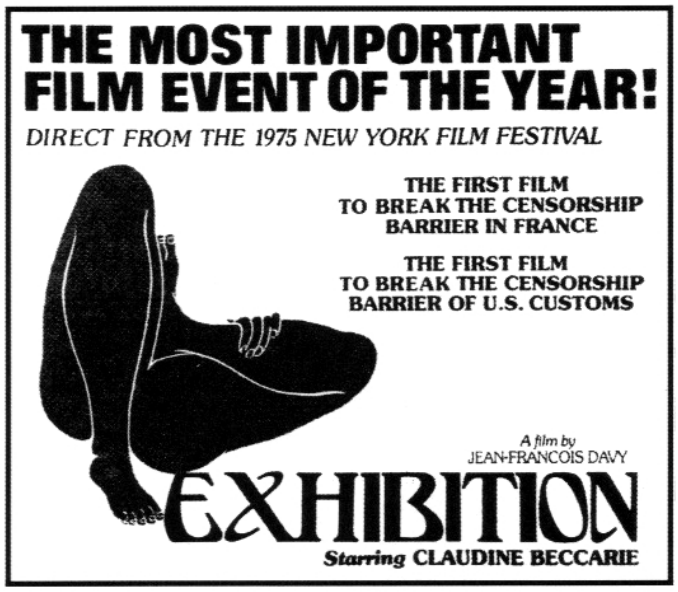
LA PUNITION (1973). Karin Schubert likes to be punished in another fun film from the director of WEIRD WEIRDO, Pierre-Alain Jolivet. She stars as a woman who is forced to become a hooker. Her pimp beats her and a client, who likes to be dominated, ties Karin and whips her. Eventually, she learns to love the abuse. Schubert later was in BLACK EMANUELLE and EMANUELLE AROUND THE WORLD, and drifted into porno. By this time her once good looks had deteriorated so bad that she looked like the twin sister of Seka. No wonder she tried to kill herself in 1994.

THAT'S EROTICA (1976). Jim and Artie Mitchell were, along with Alex De Renzy, the pioneers of the San Francisco porno scene in the late 60's and early 70's. This so-called "documentary" gives you the chance to sample scenes from over 100 of their short loops and feature films up to that time. Included are extracts from, of course, BEHIND THE GREEN DOOR, as well as THE RESURRECTION OF EVE, SODOM AND GOMORRAH, and INSIDE MARILYN CHAMBERS. Of particular note are the scenes from their real early loops such as WILD CAMPUS, RABIN'S REVENGE, THE BRIDGE, GLOWY FLESH and others too numerous to mention here. This is a good sampler of their work; especially if you can't find some of the aforementioned titles, a lot of which are very hard to find on video these days.

IN THE BEGINNING (1974). Early hardcore gay filmmaker Wakfield Poole tried to go legit in this softcore look at famous men and women of the Bible. Various episodes are depicted such as Adam and Eve, Samson and Delilah, David and Bathsheba, etc. Too arty for the grindhouse-goer and not normal enough for the mass public, the film falls somewhere in between, which is a shame as it is quite interesting in some spots. A lot of the sketches play like some wacky Off-Broadway play. Georgina Spelvin is the only recognizable face in a cast of unknowns. Not surprisingly, this one was a complete stiff at the box-office.

LA REINE MARGOT (1954). This is the first version of the Queen Margot story, remade thirty years later with Isabelle Adjani. Jeanne Moreau is the queen, who manipulates her way through the power corridors of 16th century France; culminating in the 1572 St. Bartholomew massacre of French Huguenots by the mostly Catholic population Of France. French films of the 1950's were much more daring than U.S. films of the same period. Even the mainstream movies showed a little nudity now and then. This one is no exception as Moreau gets naked a few times. Director Jean Dreville copies the style of the Abel Gance historical extravaganzas of the 1930's, and succeeds pretty well. Should we be surprised that Gance scripted this one also. Here you get to see a young Moreau, who looks great, before Louis Malle's THE LOVERS and international stardom. The same year Gance directed LA TOUR DE NESLE, which was also remade as the amazing TOWER OF THE SCREAMING VIRGINS.

JIMI PLAYS BERKELEY (1971). As some of you may know from my past reviews, I'm a big fan of Jimi Hendrix, and this perennial midnight movie favorite is among the best of a small lot. As the title indicates, the film documents, Jimi's two shows at the Berkeley Community Center on May 30, 1970. Jimi is in prime form, with the reformed Experience of Mitch Mitchell and Billy Cox, providing backup; "Johnny B. Goode" and "Hear My Train A Coming" being the musical highlights. Notice how differently Jimi looks from one show to the other. You would swear that you're seeing two different people. My only complaint would be, that most of the songs are edited and incomplete. Wish we could see both shows uncut, because they were filmed in their entirety. Still, it's pretty good. Intermixed amongst the concert footage are scenes of huge anti-war demonstrations on the Cal-Berkeley campus, and in the city itself. My favorite scene: when some people are asked why they're protesting a showing of WOODSTOCK the movie, their response is that the movie was made by the people and they shouldn't be charged $3.50 for admission!!!



EXHIBITION (1975). Claudine Beccaire was the first female French porno star, and this film tells how she got into the business. It starts off by her being raped by her uncle as a teenager, being sent to a reform school, where most of the girls are lesbians. She becomes a hooker and eventually auditions for a role in a porno movie. This was one of the first home grown porno films made in France, and was backed by one of the largest distributors in the country. It shows, as this looks like a real movie with some extended plot development and good production values. Later that same year, Claudine did a Linda Lovelace and disavowed her involvement in any of her previous forays into hardcore. She was especially incensed by this movie and unsuccessfully sued the producers for exploiting her. Jean-Francois Davy, who directed, also was one of the biggest producers of the early hardcore scene in France. EXHIBITION made lots of money, in spite of its notoriety, enough so that Davy made a second installment a year later starring Sylvia Bourdon, the second queen of French porno.

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- ☐ Baron Munchhausen ('43/In Ger. w/Eng subs) Rare
- ☐ A Bell From Hell ('73/Spain) Viveca Lindfors
- ☐ Beyond The Darkness ('79) Twisted Joe D'Amato dir
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- ☐ Body Talk ('81/X) Angelique Pettyjohn, Kay Parker
- ☐ Brain of Blood ('71/Filipino) Al Adamson directs
- ☐ Burke and Hare ('71/UK) Yutte Stensgaard nude!
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- ☐ Count Dracula ('78/BBC TV) Louis Jordan 2½ hrs
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- ☐ The Demons ('72) Jess Franco's sex-crazed nuns
- ☐ The Devil ('75/Chin./Eng. Dub) Gory Exorcist Fu!
- ☐ The Devil Doll ('64/UK) Yvonne Romain
- ☐ The Devil Ship Pirates ('64/UK) Christopher Lee
- ☐ Desert Tigers ('79/Ital.) Lea Lander & raping Nazis
- ☐ Dr. Jekyll et les Femmes ('81/in Fren/Libx) Udo Kier
- ☐ Dr. Terror's House of Horrors ('64) Cushing, Lee
- ☐ Dracula Blows His Cool ('79/German) Sex farce
- ☐ Emmanuelle's Revenge ('76/Ital) Joe D'Amato dir.
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- ☐ Eyes Without a Face ('59/in French/Eng subs/Libx.)
- ☐ Frankenstein's Great-Aunt Tillie('83/UK)Pleasance
- ☐ Fraulein Devil ('77/Ital) 3rd Reich Pleasure Train
- ☐ The Groove Room('73/UK)Diana Dors,Sex comedy
- ☐ Horror of the Zombies ('74/Spain) 3rd Blind Dead
- ☐ Hot & Saucy Pizza Girls ('78/X) Desiree Cousteau
- ☐ House on Straw Hill ('75) Linda Hayden,Udo Kier
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- ☐ I Want You ('78/X) Uschi Digart, John Holmes
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- ☐ Ilsa, She Wolf of the S.S. ('74) Dyanne Thorne
- ☐ Ilsa, The Wicked Warden ('77) Jess Franco / Uncut
- ☐ Inn of the Damned ('74/Australian) Alex Cord
- ☐ Island of the Burning Doomed ('67/UK) P. Cushing
- ☐ Lady Stay Dead ('83/Aust) Gory psycho on the loose
- ☐ Land of the Minotaur ('77/UK) Peter Cushing
- ☐ The Last Hunter ('80/Italian) Tisa Farrow, Uncut
- ☐ The Legend of Blood Castle ('72/ Spain-Italian)
- ☐ Legend of the Wolfwoman ('76/Italian) Nude wolf!
- ☐ Let's Get Laid ('77/UK) Linda Hayden in sex romp
- ☐ The Love Camp ('80/German) Laura Gemser naked
- ☐ The Loves of Irina ('73) Uncut 'X'. Jess Franco dir.
- ☐ Make Them Die Slowly ('80/Ital.) Umberto Lenzi dir.
- ☐ Mandinga ('76/Italian) Plantations, slaves and sex
- ☐ Ms. Stiletto ('69/Ital.) Brigitte Skay, Fred Williams
- ☐ Naked Super Witches of the Rio Amore ('77) Franco
- ☐ Night of the Seagulls ('75/Spain) 4th Blind Dead
- ☐ Night Train Murders ('74 Ital./Libx) Aldo Lado dir.
- ☐ Nothing But the Night ('72/UK) C. Lee, P. Cushing
- ☐ Nuns of S'ant Archangelo ('73/ Italian/Letterboxed)
- ☐ Obsession: A Taste For Fear ('89/Italian) Uncut
- ☐ Orgias Inconfesables de Emmanuelle ('82/ in Span.)
- ☐ The Other Hell ('80/ Italian) Possessed naked nuns!
- ☐ The Oval Portrait ('72/Mex)Based on Edgar A. Poe
- ☐ Pets ('73/UK)Topless women in chains & cages
- ☐ Pirates of Blood River ('62/UK) Christopher Lee
- ☐ The Raincoat Crowd ('79/X) Desiree Cousteau
- ☐ Return of the Zombies ('72/Spain) Paul Naschy
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SC chats with FASTER PUSSYCAT! KILL! KILL! starlet HAJI

Interviewed by Chris Poggiali

Best known for her pneumatic appearances in Russ Meyer gems like FASTER PUSSYCAT! KILL! KILL!, MOTORPSYCHO, and GOOD MORNING... AND GOODBYE!, Haji is a beloved icon of the sexploitation genre. In addition to Russ' releases, Haji's celluloid career has taken her from the infamous ILSA, HAREM KEEPER OF THE OIL SHEIKS to John Cassavetes-directed arthouse fare — and she was kind enough to discuss her life and past work.

SC: Let's start with your background. You were born in Canada?

Haji: I've always claimed that I'm just a visitor from another place, here to restore energy to my body. My mother was from another galaxy. She brought me here, and we settled in Quebec, but I've been here many times before that. My uncle was a great artist in Canada. His name was William Downes, and many of his works are there in museums. I stayed in Canada for a while, but my mother moved around a lot. I lived in Washington D.C., and then New York City. When we moved to New York, I became a very unhappy child because I missed the trees. I was never really a city girl. I spent a lot of my time living in the woods. I had a fear of people, so I found a lot of comfort in nature. I'm amazed at the beauty of this planet, but I am so very disappointed in most people who call themselves human beings. If you see an apple tree, you know you're going to get apples and not oranges, right? But people — they tell you one thing and they do another.

SC: At what point did you realize you wanted to become an actress?

Haji: I had never even thought about being an actress! It never entered my mind! My sister bought all the movie magazines, so I knew about Rock Hudson and Lana Turner because of her. Rock Hudson was a good-looking man, but I always liked... (Laughing) Jack Palance! All the girls would go, *"Ooooh, he scares me!"* I don't know, there was something about him. To me, he was handsome. Looking back now, I guess it was because he looked like the animals I loved in the woods! (Laughing)

SC: How did you meet up with Russ Meyer?

Haji: I got pregnant when I was very young, and I came to California with my daughter, Cerlette, who is now a beautiful young woman. She was Kelsey Grammer's live-in for seven years. I had a very nice time with her and Kelsey during those years we spent together, even though it didn't end too happily between them. Anyway, I was working as a dancer in a nightclub, and a gentleman who knew Russ Meyer came in and saw me dancing one night. He went back to Russ and said, *"You gotta see this woman! She's your type of woman!"* So Russ came in with George Costello, who became one of my favorite men in my life. He was Russ' right-hand man at the time. So they saw me, and they asked me to come in for a reading. I was very young at the time — I was underage, in fact. I had lied about my age to get the dancing job. So I went to the audition, and it was for MOTORPSYCHO! Russ gave me the script to take home, and when I came back, he liked my reading. He said, *"You got the part,"* but as I was leaving, he called me back. I remember thinking, "Oh my God, he's changed his mind!" But no, he said, *"We liked your reading so much that we want you to read for the starring role."* I said, "Whaaaat?!" So I read again, he liked it, and I got to play the lead in MOTORPSYCHO!

SC: That must've been an eye-opening experience for you.

Haji: Oh, it was! Russ worked with a five-man crew, and he took us all into the desert with snakes, lizards, and all kinds of danger. He thought if you were a guy, you could live in a tent out in the desert, but the ladies he treated better. We lived in a trailer. When you shoot in the desert, you come back with dirt in your eyelashes and hair. Our shower was a big barrel with a cork in it, set up on four sticks. You pulled the cork out, got wet, stuck the cork back in, soaped up, pulled the cork back out, rinsed off, and that was it! I never complained. Why would I? I always roughed it like that. It was easier for me than most people, and that's why Russ loved me. I already had the ability to get the job done. Then he hired me to work behind the scenes. I did make-up, wardrobe work, and some still photography. So when I got a job at MGM on a Tony Curtis movie, DON'T MAKE WAVES, I looked around and said to myself, "Look at all these people to do one film! How did Russ do it?" Whether you like his films or not, you have to give him credit for their excellent quality. The directing, the editing, the photography — the man was a genius with a camera, and he got that way because he carried one through a war with just a few men helping him. He taught me how to be a soldier — and the women on the big studio films just sat there and went to sleep! I would come home covered with bruises, and these women would spend all day going from room to room, being fed, getting their hair done, their make-up put on. It was hard working with Russ, but it was the best thing that ever happened to me.

SC: Do you remember anything about Alex Rocco, your costar in MOTORPSYCHO!?

Haji: He was wonderful. Such a gentleman, and a good friend later. He gave me my first greyhound from the tracks. That was in 1965, and I've been rescuing greyhounds and placing them in homes ever since. One of my goals before I leave this planet is to outlaw greyhound racing. Those who join my fan club should know that this is part of my work — and I need soldiers from all over the world to help me out.

SC: Is there anything to say about FASTER PUSSYCAT! KILL! KILL! that hasn't been said already?

Haji: Well, I really liked working with Tura Satana and Lori Williams. Lori looks absolutely beautiful today. We still stay in touch. I just spoke with Tura last week, and if anyone wants to hire us, we're going to do some routines together. We've had some offers already, but we're trying to figure out a routine. I went to stunt school, and I used to do stunt shows, so we're thinking about doing a routine in which we show how to throw a man around without hurting him.

SC: My favorite Russ Meyer movie is GOOD MORNING...AND GOODBYE!

Haji: That's my favorite, too! That's another one where I did all my own costuming. I got up hours ahead of time to put those costumes together. I would just go out with a big bag and collect rose petals! I was late one morning for breakfast, and Russ — he would sit at the head of the table — he said, *"Where were you?!"* I shook the bag and said, "I was in the woods cutting down my costume!" I'd tape rose petals in my hair, on my breasts, and between my legs, and that would be my costume. I glued dead bugs on my cheeks and put green sticks and moss in my hair. I had one costume with pearls that I used to wear onstage, and later I wore it in BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS. I wanted a scene where I'm up in a tree watching the people, and a tarantula crawls across my arm. I told Russ, "You have to get me a tarantula, a mountain lion, a big snake..." but he said no. After he finished editing the picture, Russ called me up and took me out to dinner. He apologized and said, *"You were right. We should've done the shot with the animals."* That's

where Russ and I got into our little fights on the set. He would only look at breasts. I looked at other things.

SC: I love your costume in SUPERVIXENS.
Haji: We lost communication on that one. Russ said, *"We're gonna be shooting in a nightclub."* At that point, a lot of young people were wearing stones on their faces. Gluing stones everywhere. It took me hours to glue those stones all over me, and when I showed up, it was this little cheap roadhouse! It's like putting an emerald on a fake gold necklace! I said to Russ, "Why didn't you tell me it was going to be this kind of place? Look at me!" But we went with the scene anyway. It was pretty, but I was just a little out of place. (Laughing) There I was, serving beer with stones all over me!

SC: It would've worked better in THE KILLING OF A CHINESE BOOKIE. What was it like working with John Cassavetes on that film?
Haji: He was very much like Russ Meyer in that they both worked with a small crew, and they had their actors do a lot of ad-libbing. They'd hire you to do one thing, and then it would turn out completely different. They were going by instinct. I know for a fact that John loved my work. I was the only one he took to see the dailies. It was strictly business, nothing hanky panky. He never came on to me. He was a gentleman, and so was Russ. Russ never made you feel like you had to put out in order to get a part. Unfortunately, I encountered a lot of that when I went on auditions. That's why I never really went anywhere with my film work. I would go to casting sessions and get propositioned all the time — but that's the way men are. I could dig out my diary and embarrass a lot of famous men, but I won't, because they can't help themselves. Mother Nature made them that way. I'm not Paula Jones. I don't like what these pathetic women are doing to men these days. They're creating pussy-whipped men, and it pisses me off.

SC: Was there a lot more footage of you that didn't make it into the final cut of THE KILLING OF A CHINESE BOOKIE?
Haji: Yes, he shot so much film of me because he liked the stuff I was doing. He just kept the film rolling. When I went to the dailies, I was so happy with my work. He could've released a whole other film of just those seven beautiful girls. Everybody I know who saw that film said, *"How come there wasn't more about the girls? We wanted more of the girls!"* If he had left more scenes of us in there, we would've gotten a lot more work from it. His son [Nick Cassavetes] is a director now, and I'd love it if he gave me that film and all the outtakes so I could reedit it. I guarantee you I could make it one hell of a film. Better than it turned out, certainly.

SC: I've never seen BANG BANG, THE MAFIA GANG. What was that about?
Haji: That was my favorite of the films I did. I was supposed to be Sophia Loren. I played Sophie, an Italian movie star who comes to America because some mobsters kidnapped her father. If Woody Allen had directed it and played the leading man, it would've been a superb film. It was a cheap film, and the director [Art Lieberman] had never made a film before in his life. When I broke down the script, I found out I had something like six different parts in flashback that I had to play, from different parts of the world and different eras. I went to the wardrobe department, and they were yawning and saying, *"Yeah, well, we got this and that."* I wasn't happy with what I saw, so I said, "Never mind, I'm gonna do my own clothes." They never could've made my character as strong as she was, not with what they had. I really had to bring a lot to it. And then the title was changed to UP YOUR ALLEY and it was sold as a sex film.

SC: I remember when it came out in 1979 as THE MELON AFFAIR, and I think it was also called SEX OR BUST at one point.
Haji: Lowlife men who have no taste — they get hold of a film like that and they don't know what to do with it. These are the men who have their brains in their penises. That film went from one lowlife man to another, instead of going to someone with a little class and taste. It's a cute, funny little film.

SC: Unlike ILSA, HAREM KEEPER OF THE OIL SHEIKS...
Haji: I will limit myself as far as doing certain things, and some of the stuff they did in that film was a little too funky for me. I liked my part, but I don't think I did a very good job with it. Some days your batteries aren't as strong as other days. The director [Don Edmonds] let me do a little directing, though. Remember when Ilsa comes through the door with the greyhounds? Those are mine. I talked [Edmonds] into it. I said, "It'll look great. They look like big cats." He was like, *"I don't know,"* he didn't quite trust me, but eventually he let me do that one little shot. That was more exciting for me than anything else in the film.

SC: I really like the musical numbers in THE AMOROUS ADVENTURES OF DON QUIXOTE AND SANCHO PANZA. Some of those songs are hilarious.
Haji: I saw the film once when it first came out, and I was disgusted with it. When I got on the set, it was totally different from the way they had described it. They showed me one script, and started filming another one. It turned out to be a really sleazy, horrible film. What I liked about it was my costume. (Laughing) I played a gypsy. And I did my own stunts. I ran up behind a donkey and jumped up on top of it in two takes. That guy who was on the donkey with me? That little screaming brat? [Hy Pike, who played Sancho Panza] In one scene, they told him to pull my shirt down and grab my breasts. Well, you should've seen what a wild gypsy I turned into after those cameras went off! Y'know how I got back at him? I jumped on the donkey while he was sitting on it. The donkey raised up and started freaking out, and the guy was screaming, *"Help! Help!"* and he fell off. He was in tears. I said, "That'll teach you not to grab my breasts!"

SC: I'm surprised Larry Buchanan didn't hire you as the costume designer on HUGHES AND HARLOW: ANGELS IN HELL.
Haji: He was the director? I don't remember him. I never even saw it. I worked so hard on my costume, make-up, and hair for that movie, so I'm dying to see what I did. I had a very small part, and George Costello got me that part. George would see how hard I worked behind the camera, and what I would do for the character. I give him the same credit. He was so professional. He'd run through fire to make a scene work.

SC: You also had a small part in DEMONOID, MESSENGER OF DEATH.
Haji: Yes, and it was great working with my dear friend Stuart Whitman on that. I go to his ranch often and visit him. Now, Stuart Whitman is a man's man! He's a real cowboy — such a man, but so polite and well-mannered. He's a womanizer, but what's wrong with that? (Laughing) That's part of being a man! When you look at all the flowers in the garden, how can you possibly say that one is more beautiful than another? And that's how men look at women — they want 'em all! *Don't change my men, you pathetic women!*

SC: You mentioned your fan club, but what else have you been up to lately?
Haji: I just became a grandmother! My beautiful granddaughter is 15 months old. Her daddy is an actor, Jeremy Roberts, who's been on XENA and HERCULES. I'm lucky that I have such a beautiful daughter, and she's very lucky to have Jeremy, who is one of the greatest fathers on the planet. I stay busy, of course. I run my fan club, Haji's World, which has a website now. I go bicycling, kayaking, body surfing in Malibu, rollerskating once in a while. I've gotten older, but my mind hasn't told me that yet! (Laughing) Being from another galaxy, I'm two-hundred-and-something years old, but I act like a 20 year-old! Ω
[Interested in contacting Haji? Write to **P.O. Box 2304, Malibu, CA 90265**, or visit Haji's World online at **www.faster-pussycat-haji.com**]

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SHARP RELIEF

by TAVIS RIKER

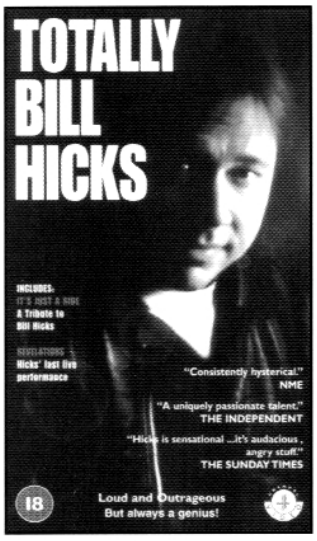
Thundering over the hills (and then shoved into your mailboxes or deposited for your consideration at finer 'zine retailers), the latest in relief, sharply. This is by far the broadest selection of music and video in S.R.'s brief history, as just TOO many wacked goodies appeared (magic!), just asking for it. So, for gravity's sake, we'll go in chronological order this time.

Back in SHOCK CINEMA #9, the 1963 gangster epic **JOHNNY COOL** was reviewed, and a mere 36 years later, the smokin' score by big band great Billy May is finally out on CD (Ryko/MGM). May's contributions to the classic '50's recordings of Peggy Lee, Nat 'King' Cole, and especially Sinatra ("Come Fly With Me"!) haven't always gotten the recognition accorded Ellington, Basie, or Riddle, so this score gives us a chance to hear a brilliant big band composer/arranger at his peak. If you've been waiting for a soundtrack that brings back memories of vintage Rat Pack style, then consider your wait over, my friend. From the blasts of brass on "Johnny Cool Theme" to the Sammy Cahn/Jimmy Van Heusen-penned "Ballad of Johnny Cool," sung by the one and only Candyman himself (Sammy also co-starred in the film, sporting his eyepatch!), you'll be knocking a few martinis back and letting it ride until the Man brings the hammer down.

A couple of years ago, the ownership of the vast library of **Jimi Hendrix** recordings returned to the Hendrix family, and the result has been a generous outpouring of remastered studio albums and expanded editions of live performances. When a stunning 2-CD release of the legendary **"Band of Gypsys"** New Year's Eve '69/'70 Fillmore East shows hit the stores, along with an 80-minute video companion (MCA), we fired up all A/V gear in anticipation. The CD is great, but the video is a major disappointment. Fans of Jimi on video have suffered through grainy bootlegs of this gig for years (O.K., was *anyone* with a camera at a rock show in the sixties NOT wasted?), so the prospect of a cleaned-up, unedited version had us hoping for prime Haze. What we get is a "VH-1: Behind the Music"-styled Rockdoc, with maybe 20-25 minutes of concert footage interrupted with interviews, which range from the essential (Jimi's engineer/sonic soulmate Eddie Kramer) to "check please" (poseur Lenny Kravitz chimes in with his "I owe it all to Jimi" banter. Yeah, we KNOW, pal.). The actual show quality is only a minor improvement on the watery boots in our Jimi closet, but since we never get a song or jam all the way through, we soon drifted back to the CD. Excuse me while I turn this OFF.

Last issue, we promised to reveal the identities of the "Kings of Saturday Morning," who counted John Lennon as one of their fans. Well, the archives at "TV lost and found" have unearthed a classic episode of **THE HUDSON BROTHERS RAZZLE DAZZLE SHOW**, and if you were a TV-watching kid in the mid-seventies, chances are pretty good that you tuned in for this whirlwind half-hour of bad jokes, cheesy pop songs, and cast of goofball regulars like Murray Langston, Rod Hull and his crazed 'Emu' (that bit is still really funny), and "The Bear." Unlike the 30-minute ads for action figures that pass for kid's TV in the 90's, RAZZLE DAZZLE had zero condescension for its audience, and piled on ideas in a 'more is more' style that produced the same results (about 50/50 laughs to groans) as prime-time fare like LAUGH-IN. It wasn't surprising that the show hit it off with adults as well (like certain ex-fabs who just *might* be stoned and watching Saturday Morning TV). This 2-hour compilation also features episodes of THE HARLEM GLOBETROTTERS POPCORN MACHINE, THE ELECTRIC COMPANY and LANCELOT LINK, SECRET CHIMP, so for an extended trip back to when kid's TV was cool, you can't go wrong here.

Easily winning the "stark and moody artfilm offering" award this column is Christopher Petit's **RADIO ON (Video Vortex)**, a 1979 British road movie co-produced by Wim Wenders. And indeed, fans of Wenders 1970's road movie cycle will find much is similar in Petit's tale of a man (David Beames) traveling from London to Bristol seeking information about his brother's death. Although the somnambulant (being kind) pace will leave most viewers feeling as alienated as the actors onscreen, there is at least a great soundtrack of classic '70's Euro-rock including Bowie, Kraftwerk, and Lene Lovich. Even Sting pops up in a brief cameo as a gas jockey with an Eddie Cochran fixation (which is why he just happens to have a Gretsch to strum while crooning "Three Steps to Heaven"). Those viewers hoping for a standard resolution of this man's search for meaning are knocking on the wrong door, because this one is marked "existential" full stop, mate! But on the music side, if you're into this late 70's period of British punk and new wave, you *need* to read "England's Dreaming" by Jon Savage, the definitive take on that scene.



In the "we was robbed" department, the tragic death of the comedian **Bill Hicks** of cancer (at age 32) took the greatest angry man of spoken word since Lenny Bruce, and the funniest stand-up comic since the mid-seventies prime of Pryor and Carlin. Largely ignored in his native USA, the Brits (luckily) picked up on his genius non-posthumously, and **TOTALLY BILL HICKS** (Channel 4 Video) is a compilation that begins with "It's Just a Ride," a career retrospective shown heavily edited on Comedy Central. But the final "Revelations," a complete concert performance shot in London, is pure uncut Hicks at his best. Hicks' specialty was taking on everybody from fundamentalist Christians to corrupt politicians and just skewering them relentlessly. Add his hilarious take on the JFK conspiracy, his pro-psychedelic drug slant, and his sex-crazed alter-ego "Goat Boy," and it's easy to see why Hicks didn't pop up often on prime-time TV or get too many bookings at Blockbuster Laff Stop. It's sad that he's gone, but this show gives us a lasting record of a visionary comedian who definitely "stomped on the terra" (I'd apologize to Lord Buckley, but he's gone too).

Last column we raved about British singer/songwriter Mark Hollis' solo album in a section themed "British Rock Recluses." Well, two notable releases on CD fall squarely into that category, and they're both amazing collections to boot. **Jeff Beck** (the one English guitar hero from the sixties who isn't a: dead, or b: in recovery) returns with his first album of new music since 1988 (and a tour in the USA), and "Who Else" (Epic Records) is a blast furnace of instrumental techno-rock, with Jeff's signature snarling/crying/laughing guitar way out front. And fire up the candles and incense for singer/songwriter **David Sylvian**'s "Dead Bees on a Cake" (Virgin Records), a stunning collection of spiritually-inclined songs, with contributions from a stellar roster of musicians including guitarist Bill Frisell and keyboardist/composer Ryuichi Sakamoto. Welcome back, gentlemen — you're needed.

The following recommendation is for progrock fans only. All others can proceed onward. "Manifesto for Futurism," the debut album from **Dali's Dilemma** (Magna Carta) *delivers*. Think Queensryche meets Dream Theatre with eighties neo-classical shred chops and a jazzy edge. Splendid!

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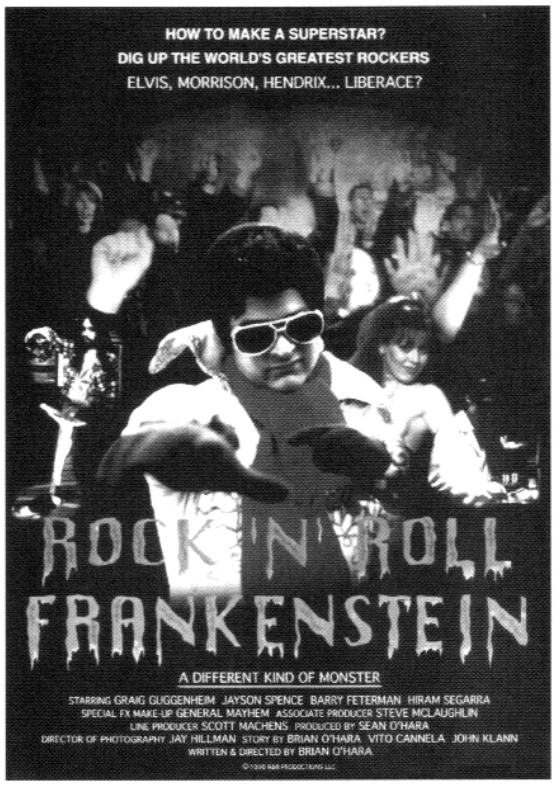
UNDERGROUND ODDITIES

ROCK 'N' ROLL FRANKENSTEIN (1998).
[R&R Productions, Brian O'Hara, 2 King Street #5C, NY, NY 10012]
Armed with a joyously tasteless concept, this inspired, feature-length horror/comedy from writer-director Brian O'Hara overflows with rancid imagination, solid production values, and outrageous performances. In a suburban laboratory, Frankie (Jayson Spence) is hard at work reanimating the dead, with his experiments funded by sleazy, music producer Uncle Bernie (the terrifically gross Barry Feterman)—who wants to stitch together the body parts of the greatest dead rock 'n' roll legends, and create a superstar who'll make him rich. With the assistance of grave robbing Iggy and his stoned roadie pals (think WAYNE'S WORLD meets Burke & Hare), they pilfer various portions of Jimi Hendrix, Sid Vicious, Keith Moon, plus the head of the King himself, Elvis. Unfortunately, due to a mix-up, instead of Jim Morrison's "love tool," the creature finds himself with Liberace's boy-toy. The result? A patchwork of VH1 perennials, who's having problems adapting to his new life, Bernie's demands, and that strange desire to shove a live gerbil up his own butt. As his musical fame grows, The King is increasingly worried about his confused sex drive (which has him doing female groupies' doggie-style, with a queer-porn mag resting on their backs), and violent repercussions aren't far away. At the center of the fun, Graig Guggenheim goes beyond the call of duty as The King, as he argues with his talking dick, screws a dead groupie's bloody stomach wound, and sports some of the ugliest fashions imaginable. You've gotta love a movie that has a guy toking on a bong, peering into a shopping bag full of bloody fetuses, and saying "Ooh shiiit, scrambled babies." Plus, there's a scene in a church, where a priest is impaled up the ass with a life-sized crucifix, which you *know* they didn't ask permission to film. Peppered with drugs, gooey effects, and songs like "Boner Blues," this is a hilarious trash classic.



CLOVEN HOOFED (1998).
[Play Loud! Productions, 78 S. 6th St. #2, Brooklyn, NY 11211; $12 + $3 post.]
The latest effort from director Dietmar Post (BOWL OF OATMEAL) is a simple, abrasive 12-minute monologue that's based on a similarly-titled play (I must've missed its Broadway run). Shot on 16mm, against a backdrop of graffitied walls and barren furnishings (a space heater, a small cage), this brief but blistering snapshot of dementia features a rather-confused crack addict who sharpens his handy knife and rants about grinding his teeth, cutting off his own dick and, in particular, the woman who recently screwed him over and stole his crack. Dumped into the middle of his raw excuse for a life, all of this is extremely theatrical, as our human pressure cooker hits his limits. Then, for a bit of shock value, Post superimposes his wayward squeeze's spread, bare cunt over the final moments of craziness. Victor Pagan is outstanding (and, if you've lived long enough in the dregs of NYC, totally believable), while Kelly Webb provides the pussy. About as far from a 'date' film as you're likely to find, this abrasive short has the same intensity as the best of the '80s underground efforts—except instead of their slapdash technique, Post recruits an expert crew for the project. It's much appreciated.

TATTOO DELUXE: PORTRAIT OF A TATTOO PARLOUR (1998).
[Larry Wessel, P.O. Box 1611, Manhattan Beach, CA 90267-1611. $25 ppd.]
Director Larry Wessel's latest feature documentary tackles a subject matter that's all-too-familiar nowadays, since tattoo parlors are as prevalent as Starbucks in most major cities (with similarly Yuppie clientele). Happily, Wessel has picked a particularly trashy San Pedro shop for his voyeuristic glimpse into its day-to-day workings. While not the scariest tattoo venue I've ever seen (that would have to be a trailer in the middle of nowhere, filled with photos of in-bred clientele who had less IQ points than teeth), it's certainly an entertaining one. Run by Peter Loggins and Jeff Thielman, these guys do good work—even if their customers often seem one fry short of a Happy Meal. In the end, the movie is less interesting for the tattooing experience (yawn), than the people who cover their bodies with (occasionally misguided) artwork. We've got customers who're having their latest love's name tattoo'd for eternity, even as they show off their previous "bitch's" burnt-off name. Another describes a Tijuana donkey show. And throughout, you wonder how many of these folks will regret their decision once their binge is over. Best of all is Merchant Sailor Steve, who rambles about his worldwide tattoo experiences. There's not a lot of insight, just a weird array of people (mostly women) getting decorated, with up-close-and-painful needlework that varies from the inane to the truly artistic. And while I wished Wessel would edit out some of the more artificial tidbits (a tap-dancing interlude, some all-too-trendy swing dancing), he does manage to capture the spontaneity of this microcosm and the oddballs who populate it.

DEAD CITY (1998).
[Threat Theatre, P.O. Box 7633, Olympia, WA 98507-7633]
For his latest feature, director Matt Jaissle spins a Michigan-lensed tale of the undead, and fans of his earlier, ultra-excessive THE NECRO FILES will probably be a bit disappointed by its less outrageous tone. It begins with human scientists again trying to train the reanimated dead for their own purposes. In this case, they're being used as high-tech super-soldiers, who kill the Professor responsible for the breakthrough, after he's double-crossed by a drug kingpin who wants to eliminate his competition with the use of these killing-machines (who wander about in ninja-gear, embellished gas masks, assault weapons, and the occasional samurai sword). Ahh, but they forgot all about the Prof's excitable son, Taylor (Tim Lovelace), who takes on his father's seemingly-unstoppable creations. In a clever twist, the heroic Taylor is killed early on, but with the aid of the Prof's old assistant (ex-Stooges guitarist Ron Asheton), Taylor is himself transformed into a undead soldier and gets a second-chance at revenge. Zombie films are a dime-a-dozen nowadays, but Jaissle tosses a couple amusing twists into this fast-paced, 83 minute outing; and while Lovelace is a somewhat bland hero, the supporting cast takes up the slack with their amusing turns. Unlike NECRO, which was full-blown cheese, this aims higher, so its shortcomings are more evident. Still, it's about an entertaining as a low-budget Cybernetic-Zombie-Stormtrooper film can be, with loads of macho posturing, plentiful (but never excessive) violence, and an action-packed climax.

SEASCHELL BEACH (1995).
[Falling Angel Films, 321 West 13th Street #4A, NY, NY 10014]
Directed, edited and co-written by Holly Angell Hardman, this atypical slice of life is fueled by an all-too-believable lead and its unerring moments of New York City-based reality. Heidi Sjursen stars as Sally, a Lower East Side resident who gets off of her waitress gig, lights up a joint, and heads to OTB—in other words, she's a typical slacker. Sexy, but seemingly defenseless, Sally blindly steps into every life-pothole, even as she examines her past mistakes (particularly an asshole boyfriend named Skip), desperately searches for answers, and always seems to embrace the wrong ones. The shit rises when she runs into Skip at OTB, he goes into his horny prick routine, and like too many women, Sally falls for some bastard's lies—only to end up in a hysterical bout and victimized once again. Howard Krupa's cinematography offers a well-lensed, dead-on view of the NYC streets, in tandem with an appealing performance from Sjursen (plus, how can you *not* like a character who goes ga-ga by buying a Josie and the Pussycats album from a street derelict?). Meanwhile, both Glenn Fitzgerald and Ami Bonacore (respectively, as Skip and his current slutbag) play assholes so effortlessly that you can't stomach 'em. Clocking in at 27 minutes, this is a slight but effective work, complete with the evocative tune "I Wanna Be Barbie," sung by Pink Box (and co-written by Sjursen).

DESECRATION (1998).
[L.D. Media, 61 East 8th Street #123, NY, NY 10003]
Back in SC#10, I reviewed Dante Tomaselli's similarly-titled short film, which left me less than thrilled (to put it mildly). In return, I received a pompous reply from Dante, angry that I didn't *get* his movie, and promising to bad-mouth my mag to everyone he knew...Needless to say, I was surprised when his feature-length version of DESECRATION suddenly turned up in my li'l old P.O. Box (and you can imagine how much I hoped the movie would suck). Hey, but I've gotta be honest, and this feature is an immense improvement from Tomaselli's earlier effort. And although a $200,000 budget might sound palatial to some, Dante puts every penny to good use. Steeped in overwrought Catholicism (as there any other type?), and expertly weaving dreams and reality, teenaged Danny Lopes plays Bobby, who has been traumatized by the death of his mother (and probably even more by a superstitious granny and a stay at a Catholic boarding school). Sure enough, creepy things begin transpiring, beginning with the death of a young man, due to Bobby's 'malfunctioning' toy airplane. As the kid's hallucinations increase (involving a demonic nun who beckons him to follow), so does the school-bound violence, as scissors suddenly fly to life (giving the FX crew plenty of gooey work), while supporting characters, such as a sleazy, drug-doling preacher, only add to the movie's overall effect. Ultimately, the film spirals into amusingly surreal directions, which often recycle its earlier film's visuals for even more potent use. In this case, its more linear narrative makes the end result all the more effective, particularly when the script spins out-of-control with dark dreams—always grounding its twisted symbolism in family dysfunction, which has taken on a life of its own. Though only 88 minutes, it often feels a bit padded out, but the film's excellent production values, sound design and music give it a totally professional edge, even as Tomaselli sticks to his admirably personal agenda. The end result is an effective, oppressive tale of psychological horror.

HOUSE OF MONSTERS (1998).
[Synchronicity Pictures, 23 Lexington Ave. #707, NY, NY 10010]
A loving homage to the Universal horror classics, this feature from director-cinematographer-star David Giardina not only does an admirable job of recreating their atmosphere on a home-made budget, but (refreshingly) plays it straight—embracing the old-fashioned characters and clichés, instead of poking fun at them. All hell breaks loose when that toothy Count Dracula (Carlo Giordani) rises from his coffin and begins rounding up his fellow monsters in a search for world-dominating "blood gems." We get the latest generation of the Frankenstein clan trying to reanimate his great-grandpa's patchwork pair; a guy transforms into a werewolf during the full moon; a museum's mummy comes to life; a "Gillman" escapes from an experimental lab; and there's even a kindly Dr. Jekyll, who keeps a bottle of secret solution handy. As the film piles one classic creature on top of another, it becomes amusing, wondering which old warhorse they'll unearth next. Meanwhile, our lead humans include comic book artist Rick (Giardina), whose girlfriend (Eleanor Ferrara) isn't only kidnapped by the horny mummy, but also becomes the fixation of a Phantom of the Opera-esque stalker. Alas, only Santo Marotta (as Wolfman Steve) brings a welcome depth to his role. Reveling in the same type of style and storyline as the Universal greats (but with some on-screen violence that definitely wasn't allowed in the '30s), the FX are unfortunately hit-and-miss (e.g. mannequins, er...*bodies* falling out of buildings). The monsters are also occasionally subpar, with the Frankenstein duo looking no better than the door-to-door Halloween variety. Although it runs out of juice long before it's over, this is a surprisingly ambitious project, respectful of its source material, and (best of all) I bet these folks had a ball making the film, since it's any monster fan's wet dream.

RANKO 2000 (1998).
[Threat Theatre, P.O. Box 7633, Olympia, WA 98507-7633]
Filled with low-grade gunplay and villains who've obviously watched MAD MAX one too many times, director-scripter-photographer Aaron Stevenson emerges with a disjointed (but always brain-damaged) no-budget action flick from Australia. In a maximum security hospital, an extremely-volatile Rambo-wannabe named John Ranko (Steve Brooks) is recruited by the administrator, when his comely daughter Genevieve (Karen Byrne) is kidnapped by a gang of free-wheeling punks. Demanding the freedom of their psychotic leader, Dingo (Laurence James Basten II), Ranko is discharged in order to save the day. So far, so crude and stupid. But after the dim-witted Ranko saves Genevieve, he instantly falls for her, and despite his lack of people skills (e.g. suddenly beating an annoying restaurant musician to a pulp) and her dad's opposition (no wonder, since out-patient Ranko seems more like a stalker than a romeo), they're married and settle down for a suburban lifestyle that includes hanging the laundry and eventually buying baby clothes. But when Dingo breaks out of the joint, the film finally takes off, as Genevieve is attacked and Ranko's newborn is *punted* off a rooftop! Yow! No surprise, this pitches Ranko into his old psycho-vet mindset and has him happily blasting everyone in sight. The best moments have these evil bikers invading Ranko's cozy suburban neighborhood, along with an ending awash in blood-and-squib-packed revenge. Never as cool as assorted moments have you hoping it'll be, this flick might have energy aplenty, it's also full of cringe-inducing amateur actors and early dull stretches. Even worse are its ludicrously-inept special effects, during which you can plainly see the wires holding up a dummy, long before it explodes. As for continuity, what's that!?

DEAD SOUL: A FAIRY TALE (1998).
[Lonely Man Productions, P.O. Box 1160, Vineyard Haven, MA 02568]

A tremendous amount of care was obviously put into this half-hour Gothic drama by writer-director David Kann, and it looks far more impressive than its $8,000 budget would've been in other hands. David Bel Ayche stars as Georges Boudet, an artist who's "pursued by demons" and currently instructing a little girl. Pulling a doll from his cabinet, the layers of his obsession are uncovered in flashbacks, as we learn the origins of his sorrow and madness, due to the beautiful, well-racked Isabella (Marisa Corradino), who he still pines for. Telling this story to his young student, in the form of a fairy tale involving a princess and her great love, Kann deftly uses children's drawings as accompaniment. But when Boudet is visited by a demon (who looks like a well-dressed member of GWAR, with a Bart Simpson haircut), this "shape" taunts him with old memories. Most of the movie is set inside Boudet's candle-lit home, which is dressed with the best Goth-props available (pipes, skulls, keys, et cetera); and when the filmmakers do venture outside, they find some visually striking locales. While all of this is exceptionally filmed, the drama comes up a bit empty, with more technique (and often impenetrable accents) than emotional depth. While some viewers might take to its lugubrious, Gothic agenda, I ultimately found it earnest, but sleep-inducing fodder, complete with an end credit tune ("A Million Years" by Human Drama) that put a final nail in its self-important coffin.

SCORPIO (1998).
[Phantom Productions, John D. Brodie, P.O. Box 16-3604, Miami, FL 33116]
Yet another no-budget indie from director Ron Atkins (SCHIZOPHRENIAC), this cheapjack spook-fest has a heavy icing of supernatural hooey. On a (supposedly) creepy night, a quartet of dim-witted college kids hit a (rather unthreatening) graveyard for a double-date of cheap thrills and beer. Meanwhile, some nasty nonsense is occurring inside, led by a Skeletor-faced ghoul (John D. Brodie) and his middling minions, including a chick who's willing to flash her tits for the camera. When the kids roam into the "unknown" section of the boneyard, these cut-rate demons take control—forcing them to smoke a holy hookah, strip naked, and get sexually abused. Still, the greatest torture is having to listen to the endless, leaden discussions about their occult, all-powerful agenda, including a run-through of the major Tarot cards (which lasts a solid, indescribably-dull eight-minutes!). The script might be well-intentioned, but the results are uninspired and overwrought, with insipid characters, and dialogue sounding more like an episode of SNL's Goth Talk ("You have just smoked the opium of our darkness"). Kenneth Anger, it ain't. Inelegantly lensed and running barely an hour (but still padded to the brim), despite all of their serious intentions, the end result is as creepy as Ed Wood's graveyard-laff-fest ORGY OF THE DEAD. All this flick needs is Criswell predicting that the actors will be stuck in their fast food jobs for years to come.

AMY STRANGLED A SMALL CHILD (1998).
[Joe Christ, 151 First Avenue #77, NY, NY 10003]
While most of the '80s underground shock-filmmakers have (1) moved onto better things, or (2) run out of ideas after their 15-minutes of self-promoted fame, Joe Christ (who entered late in the scene) continues cranking out his crude 'n' nasty work on a regular basis. As bluntly anti-social as ever, his latest 1/2-hour flick offers no redeeming social values, and even less filmmaking skill. Amanda B. James stars as the white-trash Amy, a poster-child for the pros of abortion, who's being interviewed by a film school student (Joe C.) for a project. She's quizzed about her past history of sex and drugs, filmed while picking the crud from her toes with a fork, gets puke-drunk, and finally recalls a repressed memory of how she strangled a child when she was a 5-year-old. This is a truly rancid view of humankind, with Christ reveling in Amy's repulsiveness—such as when she blows big runny chunks while he's in the middle of raping her. It's difficult to believe that any actress would allow herself to be captured for posterity in this type of demeaning light (particularly in lieu of how much cash Christ was probably paying her). Of course, this type of self-deprecating behavior is nothing new for Joe, who slips into a dress (*not* a pretty sight) for one scene. Slapdash and sordid, this overall movie is almost as annoying and distasteful as its title character.

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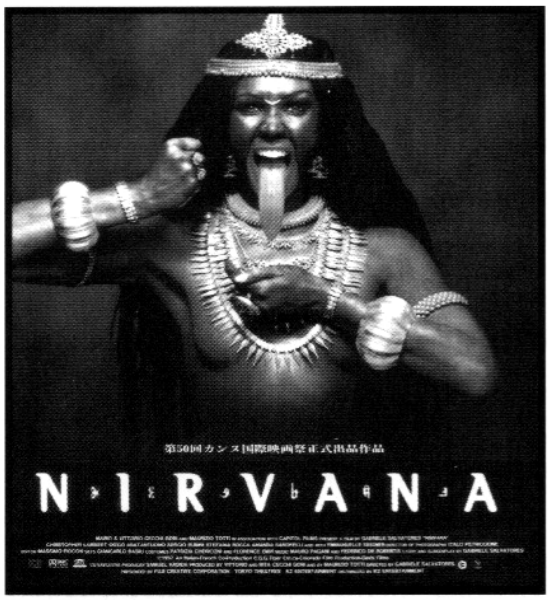
NEW RELEASES

HARD CORE LOGO (1997). Following a once-infamous Canadian punk band during their strained reunion tour, this character-driven, mock-documentary by director Bruce McDonald (HIGHWAY 61) is one of the smartest, most observant films ever made about the lower depths of the rock world, warts and all. Formed in 1978, Hard Core Logo made seven records and broke up in 1991, but despite personal differences, the four band members—Joe Dick, Billy Tallent, John Oxenberger, and Pipefitter—reunite for a benefit concert that's organized by Joe, who also recruits filmmaker Bruce McDonald to follow them on an impromptu, five-city tour across Western Canada. Along the way, the reasons for HCL's disintegration become increasingly apparent, as they're packed into a run-down van and everything possible goes wrong. Although comparisons to SPINAL TAP seem obvious, this film is a very different, more corrosive creation. Based on the book by Michael Turner, this unexpectedly-introspective faux-doc expertly captures the highs and extreme-lows of life on the road, while exploring the tense, loving, and manipulative relationships between these aging punk rockers. Hugh Dillon and Keith Callum Rennie are excellent as once-close-pals Dick and Tallent. In particular, Dillon (lead singer of the real-life band Headstones) is self-destruction incarnate—struggling to hang onto his best friend, even as Billy awaits news about joining a successful L.A. band. The film also gets high marks for Danny Nowak's raw photography, which captures Canada's gorgeous desolation. Mixing interviews, on-stage antics, a Joey Ramone cameo, and even a gratuitous LSD sequence, McDonald understands the thin line between simple satire and painful accuracy, while imbuing this pseudo-band with a humor and crude poignancy that few real-life musicians could ever hope to attain.



THE BLACKOUT (1997). Since I was one of the eight people who actually *paid* to see Abel Ferrara's Madonna-Keitel debacle, DANGEROUS GAME (and actually enjoyed it!), I figured I was the perfect audience for a Ferrara movie that couldn't get distribution in the US. Well, Abel has made several indulgent films in his glassy-eyed lifetime, but this half-baked train wreck of a movie is a low point. Beginning in the decadent niches of Miami, Matthew Modine stars as a coke-addled (but successful) actor named Matty, who's unable to remember one bridge-burning day to the next. Beatrice Dalle (BETTY BLUE) plays his girlfriend, Annie, who aborts their child after Matty goes nuts and promises to cut it out if she doesn't. After a traumatic blackout, he goes clean 'n' sober, with a new straight-arrow girlfriend (model-turned-insufferably-vapid-actress Claudia Schiffer), but is eventually drawn back to Miami's underbelly in order to purge his inner demons and learn what happened during his (possibly murderous) blackout. No surprise, within hours, Matty's a pie-eyed wreck. Meanwhile, tired old Dennis Hopper again makes us wonder what happened to his one-time acting chops (Too many drugs in the '80s? Or too few in the '90s?), playing a fucked-up video-maker whose freeform-art makes THE LAST MOVIE look coherent. The chic-pretentious backdrop is a drag, the sleaziness is artificial, and worst of all, we don't give a rat's ass about Matty—who's a boring, ego-fed ass, whether stoned or sober. No surprise, the movie is at its best when Modine's blasted (a subject wacked-out Abel knows far too much about). Sure, Ferrara knows how to capture confusion, but in this instance, the result is painfully over-ripe, arthouse hokum, fueled by hollow psychological ambitions. What have we learned? Drug are cool (the sex and debauchery), drugs are bad (the repercussions), but above all else, drugs will allow you to direct a brutal, brain-fried emotional sinkhole, full of overwrought celebs and unintentional laughter from the audience.

THE DECLINE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION PART III (1998). Director Penelope Spheeris returns to the punk roots of her classic documentary, and while the anarchy is still there, the title's irony is long gone—replaced by Los Angeles' aimless "gutterpunks." A departure from the earlier entries, the music scene takes a backseat to a more personal exploration of the grim changes within this fringe lifestyle. Interviewing kids who weren't even born when her first film was made, these self-described misfits babble about living on the streets, harassment by the cops, dysfunctional families, and staying continually drunk. These interviews are interspersed with on-stage tunes from instantly-forgettable bands Final Conflict, Litmus Green and Naked Aggression. Meanwhile, Spheeris interjects some '70s-insights from Flea, Circle Jerks' Keith Morris, and the Mau Maus' frighteningly burnt-out Rick Wilder (who makes Keith Richards look like Jack LaLanne). Blithely admitting that their minimal cash is gotten by robbing, panhandling, and "photospanging" (posing for tourist photos), these deadbeats toss back speed like they were Flintstones Chewables, brag about shitting their pants, put out cigarettes on their bare flesh, and rarely display an IQ in the triple-digits. They're also seen begging for loose change, calling people "fucking pricks" when ignored, and instantly spending any earnings on beer (hey, at least they've got one thing right). When they do get an honest-to-goodness apartment (thanks to a wheel-chair-bound punk's Disability payments), it instantly becomes a puke-encrusted party pad. Taking a break from Hollywood diarrhea like THE LITTLE RASCALS, Spheeris gets a tad too righteous this time around, trying (and failing) to convince us to care about these jerks, who emulates their '70s heroes, but lack any ambition or creativity (and will happily sell their dog in order to get loaded for a night). Spheeris works hard to come up with a streetwise portrait of these emotionally-numb kids, but more often, it's just a collection of annoying, juvenile behavior from folks who revel in their dumpster-diving lifestyle.

NIRVANA (Video Junkie; 1998). Professional-dullard Christopher Lambert has been in more shitty movies than I'd care to remember suffering through. But what do you know, the guy finally turns up in a relatively clever movie (although his performance is as leaden as ever). For this Italian-French cyber-thriller, set in the year 2005, Lambert plays a hot-shot Virtual Reality game designer named Jimi Dini. But just as his latest creation (Nirvana) is about to hit stores, he rudely discovers that his game's main character, Solo (Diego Abatantuono), has developed a self-aware mind of his own, due to a computer virus. When Solo pleads to be deleted from this ever-recycling cyber-drama, Jimi agrees to hack into his conglomerate's databank and mercy-kill his now-sentient creation. With the aid of underworld-liaison Joystick (Sergio Rubini), Lambert visits the seedy outskirts of the city, in search of a hacker who can help him avoid the database's defense-system. Although the script cobbles together several sci-fi clichés, this is still a nicely-imagined vision of the future. The cityscape is BLADE RUNNER-Lite (instead of continual rain, it's snow), there's a refreshing multi-national framework, and the headgames are fast and frequent. It's also easy to forgive the flick's ragged moments in light of its throwaway ideas, which include casual drug use, cerebrally-connected net-surfers getting their brains fried on-line, and Joystick's artificial corneas (which are gruesomely pried out by a hack Doc). Laced with William Gibson-style influences, director Gabriele Salvatores creates a compellingly artificial cyber-world, maintains an intriguing melancholy, and never dumbs down the storyline. Co-starring Emmanuelle Seigner as Jimi's ex-wife, this is a solid dose of well-intentioned Euro-sci-fi.

TAINTED (Troma; 1999). Recent releases like KILLER CONDOM and THE NOVEMBER MAN continue to prove that Troma has a knack for discovering cool pick-ups. This Detroit-lensed vampire acquisition might be low on budget, but what they lack in resources is compensated with fresh ideas and likable characters. When a fanged young man (seen salivating in front of a supermarket's meat department) is unceremoniously tracked down, bled and staked, you know it's Vampire Season again. But this flick is more concerned with three seemingly-normal guys. There's misogynistic pick-up artist Ryan (Greg James), his video-store manager pal J.T. (co-writer Sean Farley), and Dusan "Dean" Cechvala as J.T.'s late-nite employee, Alex. Attacked on their way to a movie, Alex suddenly puts the bite on their assailants and admits he's a slacker-age vampire. With these two clowns tagging along, Alex eventually learns that a psychotic vampire is on the prowl, killing off his own kind. A serial killer bloodsucker? Hey, why not?!

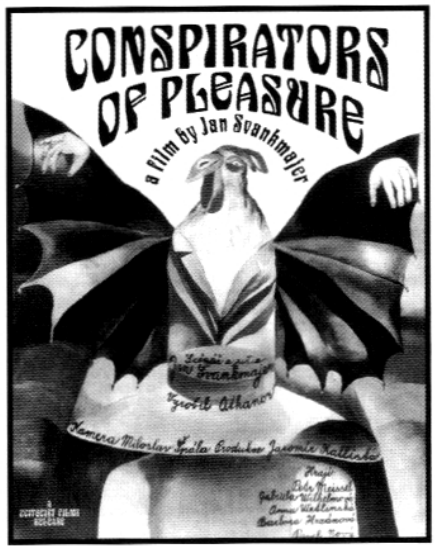
Meanwhile, these undead are so ingrained with human civilization that they keep track of sports, hang out in bars, and even turn into alcoholics. At one point, this amusing trio even hits a secret vampire nightclub which serves tall, warm glasses of blood. Although its 106 minute running time is a bit much, the film quickly grows on you. Photographed and directed by Brian Evans, its amateur roots are always apparent, but it's also full of surprising twists, welcome character development, and is energized by Cechvala's solid performance. TAINTED tackles the vampire genre on a CLERKS-level budget, with skillful camerawork and fresh ideas that lay waste to the usual bloodsucker-movie clichés. This indie effort not only has teeth, but a wealth of imagination and unexpected humor.

ICE SCREAM (Salt City Home Video; 1998). Best known for his work in PLAN 9, Conrad Brooks snags one of his juiciest roles in this horror indie. Strangely enough, four decades have passed since his Ed Wood days, and his acting is just as lousy as ever (some might argue he's gotten *worse*). As ice cream shop owner Rick, Brooks turns his business into an adult-themed parlor named Scoopettes, with flavors like Orgasmic Orange and servers in low-cut, high-hemlined attire. Of course, the place is a hit, while directors Derek Zemrak, Ronn Singh and R.M. Romano linger lovingly on any available cleavage. When one of the girls is killed, there are several suspects (a short-fused customer, their slow-witted ice cream maker, etc.), with a human eyeball later turning up in their homemade wares and the killer attacking with an ice cream box over his head. Brooks' character is supposed to act stupid and drunk much of the time, and he's thoroughly convincing; and while the box boasts that this is his "best performance in years," if you think about the guy's recent work (e.g. BIKINI CAR WASH), that's faint praise. At least he's in good company, since this is also ladies' amateur night. Sure, I realize that you need to approach a no-budget flick like this with limited expectations, but *this* is ridiculous. It's technically lame, there's no suspense, the acting sucks, and even the T&A is limp—consisting of tame, endless up-skirt and down-blouse shots. Stretched to a whopping 62 minutes (plus 10 minutes of grim bloopers), this manages to give home-made productions a bad name.

PLENILUNIO (Salt City Home Video; 1993). Here's something you don't see everyday; a South American, English-subtitled werewolf movie. Even better, it's a lot of low-grade fun, courtesy of director-writer Ricardo Islas, who's made several indie horror features in his Uruguay homeland, including CROWLEY and ALMOHADÓN DE PLUMAS...When a food-stand owner is savagely murdered by a wild animal, the local kids get the idea that a werewolf is to blame and await the next plenilunio (period of the full moon). In the process, they encounter the teenage children of the murder victim; plus there's adult Roberto (Ricardo Islas), a cable-TV producer who allows his studio to be the local teen hangout. No, the guy isn't a pedophile, just a good-hearted bloke with similar interests (e.g. intently reading a South American copy of FANGORIA). Like a South-of-the-Equator Hardy Boys, they begin investigating, and even blithely break into a suspect's home. But it's the genuinely creepy finale that makes this worthwhile, when the killer turns out to be even more evil while in human form (Martin Cabrera), particularly when he traps the kids in a secluded studio and promises to slaughter all of them come nightfall. He definitely gets the nastiest moments and the best dialogue. Unfortunately, any suspense is diluted by the movie's hilarious, home-made monster costume! Wisely, Islas keeps it hidden (or seen only in flashes), because it's about a frightening as a big, white, toothy Teddy Bear. Though a tad predictable, Islas hits all of the necessary bases with a minimum of annoyance, earning an A for effort, but a D+ for execution.

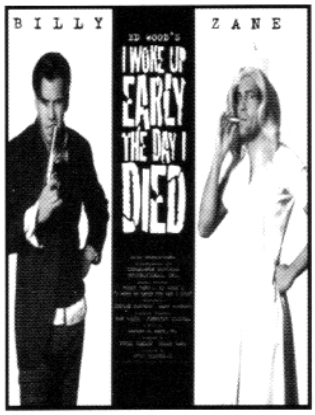
I WOKE UP EARLY THE DAY I DIED (1998). Based on one of Ed Wood Jr.'s final scripts, director Aris Iliopulos tries to suck one last dollar out of the dead guy's legacy with this bizarre, star-studded concoction. Without any dialogue, but with plenty of Woodsian dementia, this runs out of charm and good-will early on, but it's still fun to count how many high-and-low-end celebs climbed onto this project. In a gleefully manic performance, Billy Zane chews-up-and-spits-out the starring role of a "Thief" who escapes from a sanitarium (in nurse-drag, no less). With the subtlety of a live-action Snidley Whiplash on bad acid, Zane stumbles into a cemetery after a bank robbery and stashes his loot inside a post-funeral casket—

SHORT TAKES: No question, **RUN, LOLA, RUN (1998)** is going to be a smash when it opens in the US. This hyper-stylish German romp from director Tom Twyker sucks the audience in during its first moments, and catapults its characters through the script's playful agenda. When an idiot money-runner loses 100,000 Deutsche marks that belong to a local thug, his flaming-haired girlfriend, Lola, has only 20 minutes to save his ass by rounding up the cash in any possible way—which includes robbery, kidnapping, strained family relations, and good use of Elvis' "I Can't Help Falling in Love With You." Then, in a ballsy move (best kept a surprise), Twyker demonstrates how the tiniest twists of fate can effect one's future. Meticulously constructed and directed, Twyker incorporates comic elements, animation, and dazzling photographic-montages. At the forefront, sexy Franka Potente makes the most of her exhausting role, which has her spending most of the movie sprinting throughout the city. Fast-paced, colorful and tremendously enjoyable, RUN, LOLA, RUN is a delight!...**THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT (Artisan; 1999)** is getting a lot of hype after its recent Sundance appearance. In one of those rare instances, the hype is deserved. This is a small, perfectly-realized horror film that transcends its limited resources with one of the year's most imaginative concepts. In a prologue, we're told that three college film students disappeared in the Maryland wilderness while making a movie about a local legend called the Blair Witch. Only their cameras were found, and this film consists of their verité-footage (mixing video and b&w 16mm). Heather Donahue, Michael Williams and Joshua Leonard play the doomed trio, who cheerfully prepare for a two-day trip into the woods, only to end up lost, starving and terrorized by forces they can't possibly understand. Like the great old horror movies of the pre-grue past, this relies on terrors that are left unseen, deftly-developed characters, and filmmaking savvy. Writer-directors Eduardo Sanchez & Daniel Myrick never hit a false note, while the three leads are up to the increasingly-hysterical task. This demands to be seen in a theatre, since you'll do the film a disservice by watching it in the comfort of your living room...Finally on



US video, **CONSPIRATORS OF PLEASURE (Kino; 1996)** is another surreal gem from legendary Czech-filmmaker Jan Svankmajer. A voyeuristic delight, this explores the world of extreme sexual perversity, as only he can. Using a minimum of Jan's acclaimed stop-action animation and almost no dialogue, an array of seemingly-normal characters indulge in their secret, fascinatingly complex compulsions—all tenuously linked together into a tapestry of perverse pleasures, which includes rolling pin massage, toe-sucking by fish, a papier-maché chicken head, a masturbation machine fueled by a female TV-newscaster, and a 'conspiracy' of sly glances. Sounds weird? Damned right! It's also thoroughly absorbing, as Svankmajer manipulates his human actors in ways his early puppets would never be able to, and sparingly uses his animation to bring their gleefully grotesque fantasies to fruition—as effigies come to life, bread-balls are snorted up one's nose, and his audience is dazzled...Offering an avant-garde take on the serial killer genre, **SOMBRE (1998)** is a demanding (and often annoying) French psycho-drama from freshman director Philippe Grandrieux. Marc Barbé stars as the disturbed Jean, who leaves various women (a peep show slut, a roadside hooker) lifeless, as he drives around the countryside. The haunting Elina Lowensohn (NADJA) is Claire, whose car has broken down and becomes Jean's object of obsession. With her sister Christine (Geraldine Voillat) in tow, this trio ignites the film's most powerful moments, as Jean brutalizes the women, even as virgin Claire thrives in this atmosphere. Filled with dream fragments and arresting imagery, its handheld photography, editing and score (the later composed by Alan Vega, of the band Suicide) evokes the chaos within this killer. As emotionally detached as it is visually breathtaking (no surprise, Grandrieux was once a video installation artist), this low-key dirge oozes with alienation. Still, it's a difficult one to sit through—imagine Stan Brakhage directing HENRY: PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER—with its experimental veneer relegating it to only the artiest film festivals...Danish director Nicolas Winding Refn's feature debut arrives in the hard-driving **PUSHER (European Trash Cinema; 1996)**, which takes a face-first plunge into the world of an unlucky, drug-dealing slimeball named Frank (Kim Bodnia). Already dangerously in debt, he's busted in the middle of a lucrative deal, loses the heroin, and what begins as a simple slice-of-life quickly transforms into a high-energy trail of corpses—as Frank tries to scrape up the cash to keep himself alive by hitting up the even-more-pathetic folks who owe *him*. Good fuckin' luck. Although the possibility of love (with girlfriend Laura Drasbæk) enters the picture, the narrative more often operates on the type of junkie-logic that keeps Frank continually at risk, and a disdain for just about every down-'n'-dirty character. The hand-held camerawork provides an urgent allure, while the dead-on performances dig under the skin of these low-life clods (whether you want to or not). Definitely not a feel-good movie, this arthouse-junkie-drama only gets darker and more nihilistic as it progresses, with self-destructive characters and an unsanitized (but crudely stylized) view of their world.

which promptly disappears. Obtaining a list of the mourners, he tracks them down, searches for his cash, and kills each in the process. We get Sandra Bernhard as an exotic dancer; Tippi Hedren as a deaf woman (accompanied by Hitchcockian music and visuals); Christina Ricci as a flophouse hooker; and John Ritter playing a carnival cowboy. Bud Cort is a salesman who sniffs ladies' pumps, Ron Perlman is a bagpipe-playing gravedigger, plus there's Andrew McCarthy, Ann Magnuson, Eartha Kitt, Maila Nurmi (Vampira), Karen Black, Nicolette Sheridan, and more faces than I want to recall. The major difference between this film and Wood's oeuvre is that Ed always took his work seriously (can you recall one *intentional* laugh in his flicks?), while this is high-camp straight out of the gate. It's also competently lensed and packed with honest-to-goodness (albeit barely utilized) talent, which makes this the antithesis of Wood's work. In lieu of his gloriously ripe dialogue, it relies on background sounds, screams, groans, mock-educational footage, and indie tunes. In the end, it lacks Woods' pathetic passion, in favor of a retro, off-kilter trendiness that always rings hollow.



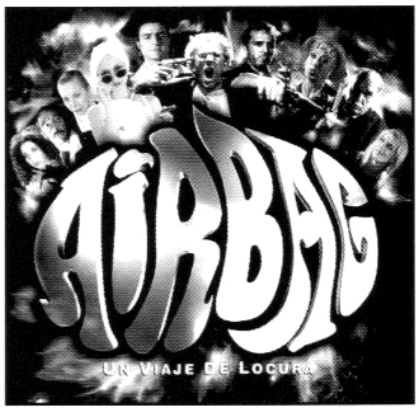
SCHIZOPHRENIAC: THE WHORE MANGLER (E.I. Independent; 1998). First off, when a filmmaker chooses a title as blatantly brutal as this, they better damned well deliver, because viewers who willingly pick up a movie subtitled THE WHORE MANGLER aren't look for run-of-the-mill deviance. Thankfully, this crude, no-budget indie not only revels in sick-assed elements, but is energized by John Giancaspro's unforgettably repellent performance as the title-creep. As for the plot? Meet Harry Russo, a chrome-domed asshole who, by day, is a low-budget filmmaker-wannabe. By night, coked-up Harry's psychotic tendencies take control, and aided by a noseful of powerful drugs and a psychic link to a cheap ventriloquist's dummy named Rubberneck, he's compelled to kill! With an insatiable hatred for women *and* whores (which he often considers synonymous), even after he kills one, Harry's unable to get off while "fucking the dead bitch." Soon, he takes out his craziness on anyone he meets, including the patrons of a porno theatre. This flick would be nothing without Giancaspro's presence. He babbles like a true basketcase, dresses in drag, gleefully stuffs drugs into any available orifice, and give his all for this piece of shit. He also deserves credit for making us genuinely wonder if he's this nuts in real life; and it's difficult not to laugh when our madman traipses about in a mini-skirt and blonde wig. Laced with gratuitous female nudity, this ultra-crude flick just keep rolling along, thanks to its outrageous, into-the-abyss lead performance. I also got the impression that director-writer-photographer-editor Ron Atkins actually embraced this vile, rude and exuberant enterprise like a labor of love. I'm scared.

DOGS IN QUICKSAND (1998). In this highly-amusing, indie vision of small-town sex, secrets and slimebags, writer-director Mike Trippiedi has concocted a winning endeavor, full of unpredictable twists. Deftly scrambling several white-trash scenarios, it begins when a maladjusted middle-aged wife, Lisa (Anne Shapland Kearns) hires a streetwalker named Monique (Mina Willis) for her husband's birthday. Oddly enough, instead of wanting to screw Monique, all hubbie Mitch (Mike Trippiedi) wants to do is dance, forget his problems, and shell out an additional sawbuck for a simple hug. In other local events, another husband is cheating on his wife with a blonde floozy; an off-duty cop hires a whore for some fetishistic wrestling games; and a guy who's terminally ill with liver damage wants to go out with a bang. All of these threads come together when murder erupts, Mitch becomes the prime suspect, and little is what it seems. As the characters become increasingly complex, and their masks are discarded, the script revels in absurd and violent plot twists. Meanwhile, everyone knows each other, even as one-half is screwing over the other half—or, at least *thinks* they are. At the forefront, Monique and Mitch make a good on-screen pair, with confrontations that are both strangely humorous and unexpectedly touching. And considering its indie roots, this is professionally lensed, with solid performances. Well-plotted and delightfully unpredictable, Trippiedi skillfully weaves together his emotional potholes and never strays far from its lovable, B-movie agenda of sin and insanity. This DOG is both quirky and recommended.

ZOMBIE TOXIN (E.I. Independent; 1996). This no-budget UK gore-fest proudly boasts of being "Monty Python meets DAWN OF THE DEAD." Actually, it's more like CARRY ON HERSCHELL GORDON LEWIS (although that's probably an insult to old H.G., since his films were technically superior). Set near an S&M slaughterhouse in the middle of a British countryside (with torture provided by Mr. Nasty and the inept Benny), a virulent toxin has the locals foaming at the mouth, shitting like Old Faithful, and turning into spotty-faced zombies. In addition, there's a Hitler-meets-Benny-Hill loser named Adolph, who (with his toady assistant Gerbils) wants to use these diarrhetic undead to destroy the world. After a midpoint musical interlude, the second half involves Adolph's plan to create flying bottles of mutant, toxic wine. Huh?! If you had trouble surviving the first half, the second will have you prying the tape out of your VCR with a screwdriver. Obviously aspiring to be a crude, BAD TASTE-style grue-fest, this proves that just because something's a labor of love doesn't mean it's worth a damn. Besides being painfully unamusing, the sound looping is wretched, the special effects are excessive but unexciting (primarily consisting of a fake, oozing asshole), and most of the filmmakers also play the leads. Director/co-scripter Tom J. Moose is Adolph, with support from script partners Robert Taylor (Benny, Gerbils) and Adrian Ottiwell (Mr. Nasty). Their acting makes Carrot Top look restrained. Unbearable at even 68 minutes, it's nice to know that it's not just US fanboys who're wasting time and money on this type of rubbish.

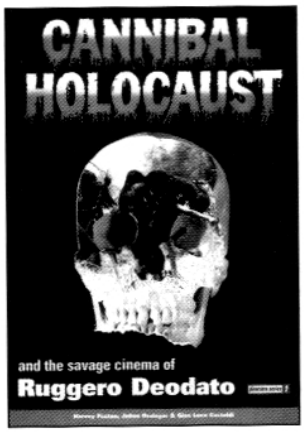
THE IDIOTS (VSoM; 1998). With the exception of THE KINGDOM and its equally addictive follow-up, I've never been a fan of Lars von Triers' work. Nevertheless, I gave this feature a shot because it may never appear on US screens, since von Trier refuses to snip a few seconds of nudity and hardcore sex, which would land it an NC-17 rating. This ballsy, confrontational drama-comedy follows a commune of men and women, who rebel against restrictive, middle class society by pretending to be retarded. Led by Stoffer (Jens Albinus), they make messes in fancy restaurants (and escape without paying) and take field trips to unsuspecting businesses. The latest addition to their "inner idiot" antics is Karen (Bodil Jorgensen), a lonely woman still reeling from personal tragedy, who doesn't know what to make of their "spazzing," but tags along anyway. Although these "idiots" act as if they have higher goals, much of the time, this is simply Bourgeois Behaving Badly. They all happily sack out in the expansive country home of Stoffer's uncle, and freak out a real estate agent in order to save their squat. When they're not convincing some barroom bikers to take a mentally handicapped guy to the bathroom and help him piss, they're happily lounging around their makeshift home, playing with caviar. No question, the scene most likely to offend is a party-turned-gangbang-orgy, but what most offended *me* were these bored, well-off asswipes and their practical jokes. Terribly annoying at times, but also strangely compelling (mostly due to the emotionally-fragmented Karen), this runs on a seemingly-spontaneous agenda. Against all odds, some wicked humor peeks through, and by the finale, it erupts with unexpected power and emotion. Filled with naturalistic performances, raw style, and unfocused ambitions, this has its moments, but is never more than an ingenious exercise in arthouse 'tardsploitation.

AIRBAG (1997). Director Juanma Bajo Ulloa's earlier features (BUTTERFLY WINGS, THE DEAD MOTHER) barely played on this side of the Atlantic, and while this offbeat road movie was a smash in Spain, it has only been screened here during film-fest gigs. That's too bad, since the flick is fueled by deliriously oddball ideas. Winning us over during its first moments (Russian Roulette, played with poison-mushroom omelets), this only gets sillier. Juantxo (Karra Elejalde) stars as a sedate lawyer, on the verge of marrying the beautiful daughter of a wealthy marquise. Only days before the ceremony, Juantxo's buddies haul him to a high-class whorehouse (so he can finally lose his virginity), but in the process, he loses his outrageously expensive engagement ring while poking up a prostitute's ass. When her pimp takes off with the ring, Juantxo and his inept pals go in pursuit, on a half-baked road trip complete with a traveling bordello-caravan, a coke deal that goes screwy, rival gangs, STARSKY AND HUTCH references, and mild-mannered Juantxo taking on the guise of a dangerous hood. Platinum-locked Maria de Medieros (HENRY & JUNE) turns up as a Voodoo woman who tracks down this trio; and while bouncing from one outrageous bordello to another, this becomes a liberating experience for Juantxo, even as he's trying to hurry home for his wedding. Occasionally resorting to broad humor and current crime clichés, more often, this world is ruled by absurdity—such as when a tense gangland meeting explodes with gunfire that's initiated by a pesky fly. FYI, the title refers to car airbags that continually malfunction at the most inappropriate moments. Deftly avoiding the annoying hipness of similar US indie fare, this moves along with style and humor, mixing black comedy and brazen violence into a distinctly quirky vision.



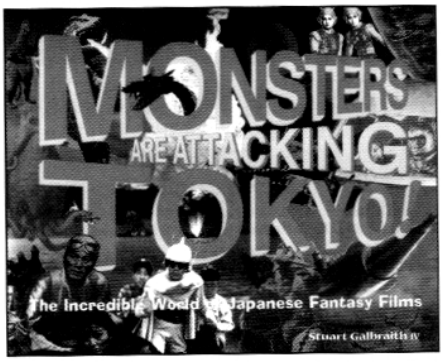
BOOKS AND ZINES

CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST AND THE SAVAGE CINEMA OF RUGGERO DEODATO by Harvey Fenton, Julian Grainger & Gian Luca Castoldi (FAB Press, PO Box 178, Guildford, Surrey, GU3 2YU, England; $24.95).
For their first Directors Series release, FAB Press has produced a beautiful, grue-packed tribute to director Ruggero Deodato, best known to for his 1980 gore-watershed, CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST. No one-hit-wonder, Deodato has been hard at work since the '60s, churning out everything from sexploitation, muscle-bound fantasies and cop thrillers, but is best known for harder-edged fare such as HOUSE ON THE EDGE OF THE PARK, THE WASHING MACHINE and CUT AND RUN. Enthusiastically written, it begins with a lengthy interview with the man himself, as Deodato recalls his early days as Roberto Rossellini's assistant, along with plenty of no-bullshit movie-making anecdotes. After that, the majority of the book is a lovingly-detailed filmography, with extensive credits and spot-on criticism. Of course, let's not forget all of the color photos, full-page reproductions of promotional artwork (much of it devoted to CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST and its indelible imagery), and plenty of gooey on-screen highlights. Both insightful and enjoyably lurid, this outstanding effort is a must-have for any Deodato fan.

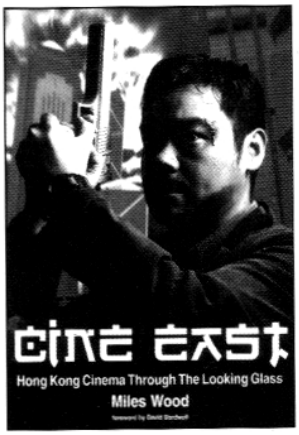


JAPANESE CINEMA ENCYCLOPEDIA: THE SEX FILMS by Thomas Weisser and Yuko Mihara Weisser (Vital Books; $28.00).
The latest book from the Weissers is their biggest, most jawdropping effort yet. Focusing on the wide world of Japanese "pink films" (*pinku eiga*), this 640-page volume (no, that number *wasn't* a typo) covers everything from the earliest days of studio competition during the '60s, to Nikkatsu's reign as the ultimate in Asian erotica, to current-day sexploitation. Using a 1-to-4 star rating system, it's no surprise that low-marks prevail, since most of the movies sound like the equivalent of US drive-in fare (only *much* weirder), such as SCANTY-PANTY DOLL: PUNGENT AROMA. Still, when they're enthusiastic about a movie, you definitely want to check it out for yourself (alas, I don't think Blockbuster has their Pink Films section up-and-running yet). In addition to its A-to-Z listing of the films' credits and plots, the book is sprinkled with essays that tackle the fine art of fogging, as well as the greatest Pink filmmakers and actresses. I've only seen a handful of these films, so much of this was fresh (and fascinating) to me. And in case you're worried that this is all text and no tease, color inserts are included, featuring often-undraped starlet-pix. The only downside is that when you're covering so many interchangeable sex films, it's impossible to not get a bit repetitive in long doses. Still, this is an exhaustive project, tackling a cinematic subject usually ignored on this side of the globe.

MONSTERS ARE ATTACKING TOKYO! THE INCREDIBLE WORLD OF JAPANESE FANTASY FILMS by Stuart Galbraith IV (Feral House; $16.95).
I've been a longtime fan of Japanese monster movies (first, as a child, and later, once I started drinking), and it's always great to see another book on the market, dealing with the grand old days of these rubber-suited classics—particularly when it's written with such a respectful and ingratiating edge. Beginning with a accomplished overview of the entire genre, Galbraith moves onto the foundation of his book, which takes recollections from dozens of actors and filmmakers (including Ishiro Honda, Jun Fukuda, Kinji Fukasaku, Akira Ifukube), and weaves these "witnesses" into a first-hand chronology of Japanese *kaiju eiga*. So instead of focusing on one person at a time, this offers a jumble of experiences—beginning at the end of WWII, to the birth of Godzilla, their special effects, offshoots such as Gamera, plus such enjoyable tidbits as Henry Saperstein on the redubbing of WHAT'S UP, TIGER LILY? All the while, this overflows with information, as well as brief bios of the major-and-minor figures within this genre, and a filmography that rates the movie's original *and* English-bastardized versions. Joyously embracing these monster romps, Galbraith displays both a love for the genre, an intelligence of what made them so damned appealing, as well as a critical eye (which nails the more obvious stinkers). Thoroughly entertaining, it's also smart enough to encourage cynics to give these fantastic films a second chance.



CINE EAST: HONG KONG THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS by Miles Wood (FAB Press, PO Box 178, Guildford, Surrey, GU3 2YU, England; £9.95).
In the past few years, several books on Hong Kong cinema have turned up on English-language book shelves, with the best realizing that there's more to the genre than stylishly slo-mo, bullet-riddled bodies. The book definitely fits into that welcome category. Happily straying from the usual territory, this 160-page volume focuses on interviews with a dozen lesser-known (but no less talented) figures, who're rarely profiled on this side of the globe. From the heyday of the '80s, to the latest up-and-comers, subjects include Maggie Cheung (on her move from Jackie Chan-fare to arthouse hits like IRMA VEP), award-winning actor Anthony Wong, and directors Clara Law and Simon Yam. Often hit-and-miss, depending on how interesting the person is, other winning profiles include actor Lau Ching Wan, cinematographer Andrew Lau, and singer-actress Gigi Leung. Sprinkled with ad slicks and photos, the Q&A's are surprisingly honest (complete with occasionally harsh comments about their *own* movies). Even more important, Woods is a deft, informed interviewer, who knows his subject matter inside-out. Well-packaged and informative, this offers a look at some of the HK filmmakers who helped make it one of the most exciting industry's of '90s.



RENEGADE SISTERS: GIRL GANGS ON FILM by Bev Zalcock (Creation Books; $19.95).
Tackling the lengthy history of girl gang movies, in all of their empowering permutations, this takes us from B-movies and crass exploitation, to underground efforts. Focusing only on European & American entries, this volume certainly contains a strange grouping of flicks, from MÄDCHEN IN UNIFORM, to SWITCHBLADE SISTERS, to CAT WOMEN ON THE MOON. Each of its seven chapters focuses on a different aspect of this genre, including Women-In-Prison, girls' school romps, fetishized sci-fi temptresses, and even Nunsploitation. In addition, Zalcock uses any excuse to segue into experimental feminist-indies (and even gives a plug to her own short film). Unfortunately, while I've loved underground efforts such as BORN IN FLAMES, most of these sound far less entertaining than crap-classics like SHE-DEVILS ON WHEELS. Despite its lurid cover, anyone expecting a tawdry guide will be bored, because instead of taking the low road (counting the number of gratuitous showers), she chronicles their history *and* social significance. Mind you, there's nothing wrong with that. But in this case, the result often sounds more like a long-winded Woman's Studies text. Zalcock has plenty of intelligent points about the evolution (and often devolution) of the genre, but too often belabors them, thus sapping the films of their energy and urgency.

VIDEO DISTRIBUTORS

ALPHA BLUE ARCHIVES, Dept. Shock, P.O. Box 16072, Oakland, CA 94610. An amazing array of vintage sleaze, from softcore oddities to harder-edged gems starring the genre's raunchiest names.

BLACKEST HEART MEDIA, c/o Shawn Smith, P.O. Box 3376, Antioch, CA 94531-3376. Featuring some of the weirdest, nastiest films and products on the planet, as well as exclusive vid-dementia that you'll have to see to believe. Only $3 for their catalog.

BOOTLEG LIFE, P.O. Box 138545, Chicago, IL 60613. These video degenerates offer up some of the raunchiest, grimmest XXX-'n'-fetish pics from around the globe. $4 (plus age statement) for their "Scatalog."

CREATURE FEATURE VIDEO, P.O. Box 602, Dept. SC, Northford, CT 06472. A terrific collection of EuroTrash, horror, giant monsters & obscure blaxploitation. Send a postcard for their catalog.

EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA, P.O. Box 12161, Spring, TX 77391-2161. Craig Ledbetter has unearthed some of the most outrageous EuroTrash imaginable, and his catalog ($3) is filled with bizarre films even *I'd* never heard of. Packed with exclusive oddities, he gets my highest recommendation!

JUST FOR THE HELL OF IT, Dept. SC, P.O. Box 19, Butler, NJ 07405. J4HI features the very best from the grindhouse past, the old *Gore Gazette* video collection, and lots more! $3 gets you their amazing NEW catalog, overflowing with mind-blowing tapes (checks made out to Mike Decker). Recommended!

LUMINOUS FILM & VIDEO WURKS, P.O. Box 1047. Dept. SC, Medford, NY 11763. Offering everything from ultra-obscure European sex pics and spaghetti westerns, to unreleased-in-the-US arthouse fare. All with full color packaging.

PHANTOM VIDEO, P.O. Box 16-3604, Miami, FL 33116. A wealth of ultra-sleazy videos, including gory, uncut EuroTrash, and triple-X dementia from around the world. $3 gets you their catalog.

SHOCKING IMAGES, P.O.Box 601972, Sacramento, CA 95860. Offering up rare exploitation videos, Asian titles, laserdiscs, and import CD's. E-mail: info@shockingimages.com.

SHOCKING VIDEOS, c/o Mark Johnston, HC-77 Box 111, Hinton, WV 25951. A jaw-dropping selection of video rarities, from grindhouse classics to mind-roasting oddities which have never made it to legit video. Tons of amazing stuff! E-mail: shockingvideos@citynet.net.

SOMETHING WEIRD VIDEO, P.O. Box 33664, Seattle, WA 98133. If you're in search of grindhouse-era sexploitation (and beyond), this is the mother load. Always expending their massive catalog, it's crammed with XXX-sleaze and once-lost gems.

TAPES OF TERROR, c/o P. Riggs, 11430 Mullins Drive, Dept. SC, Houston, TX 77035-2632. Hitting all the exploitation genres, their huge inventory ranges from horror 'n' sleaze rarities to the tops in Cult Cinema. $1 gets you their updated catalog.

VIDEO DUNGEON, P.O. Box 873, Tarpon Springs, FL 34688. Their catalog ($3) offers an array of sleazy horror, sexploitation and weirdness from around the globe. (Checks payable to M. Wilson.)

VIDEO HOLOCAUST, P.O. Box 3187, Waterbury, CT 06705. $2 gets you their thick catalog, crammed with XXX-porn and Eurotrash sleaze.

VIDEO JUNKIE, P.O. Box 1794, Aurora, IL 60507. Overflowing with uncut, cutting-edge releases, plus flicks from genre geniuses such as Argento, Fulci, Naschy, and more! Their catalog is $3.

VIDEO SEARCH OF MIAMI, P.O. Box 16-1917, Miami, Fl 33116-1917. An amazing mix of overseas delights, including giallos, Asian dementia and arthouse rarities. Write NOW for their free catalog.

VIDEO VORTEX, 429 Danforth Ave. Suite 414, Dept. SC, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M4K 1P1. Offering up the most bizarre, uncut films from around the globe; and five dollars gets you their ultra-thick catalog (postal money orders or cash only).

VIDEO WASTELAND, 214 Fair Street, Berea, OH 44017-1554. In addition to their incredible mail-order rental service (with 1000's of titles), VW sells a wide array of rare books, mags and soundtracks.

WITCHING HOUR VIDEO, P.O. Box 806 - University Station, Lexington, KY 40506-0025. Chock full of video sleaze, gore and sickness, $4 gets you their new, 107-page catalog.

EROS IN HELL: SEX BLOOD AND MADNESS IN JAPANESE CINEMA by Jack Hunter (Creation Books; $19.95).
When it comes to exploitation cinema, the Japanese pretty much have the competition beat, by churning out some of the goriest, gooiest, most insanely erotic flicks imaginable. This volume brings an in-depth critical analysis to this mind-roasting fare. Chapters include torture-'n'-bondage cinema, a tribute to Oshima's controversial IN THE REALM OF THE SENSES, the hardcore violence of films such as the GUINEA PIG series, and the New Japanese Underground. In addition, filmmaker profiles include Hisayasu Sato, Koji Wakamatsu and Shojin Fukui (RUBBER'S LOVER)—with the last two including interviews. Beginning with the unwieldy task of squeezing the Japanese film genres of sex, blood and mutilation between two covers, author Jack Hunter proves he's up to the task, making it accessible for novices, informative for fans, and hitting all of the most important bases, including RAPEMAN, BLIND BEAST (Moju), FUDOH, ATROCITY and BURST CITY (all reviewed in past issues of SC). Although always approaching these films with an intelligent eye, it's also amusing when he indulges in lengthy descriptions of their most lurid moments (all in the name of good criticism, of course). Who can argue when a 28-page, educational history of the "pink film" spends over 20 of those pages on nudie pix from these films? Now *there's* the best of both worlds.

ZULAWSKI edited by Daniel Bird (Keele University Press; Contact: goto27@aol.com).
So little is known of director Andrzej Zulawski in the US, that's it's great to see *anything* that gives the public a glimpse into his wild, adventurous career. This thin volume was produced to coincide with a London-based "Zulawski Weekend" back in '98. Limited to only 150 copies, it consists of two lengthy essays, one brief stream-of-consciousness tribute (which reads more like Beat Poetry with a thesaurus), plus a filmography of his work, accompanied by rudimentary credits and a sprinkling of trivia and/or critical reaction. The essays are the foundation of the book, with Ewa Strzalek-Smalls interpreting Zulawski's epic POSSESSION in Jungian terms (yawn), while Daniel Bird comes up with an informative, accessible look at his early body of work (before-and-including POSSESSION), literary influences and misinterpretations. The later is a solid introduction to Zulawski's striking vision. Although rather slight (I've only seen four of his movies, and I'm starving for new info), I don't see anyone else pulling together a book on the guy, so Bird certainly gets my respect.

MICHAEL BERRYMAN: THE MAN AND HIS MOVIES by Paul J. Brown (Midnight Media, PO Box 211, Huntingdon, PE18 8WD, England; $12 ppd.).
Ever since his appearance in THE HILLS HAVE EYES, Michael Berryman has brought his chrome-domed dementia to motion picture screens in dozens of roles, both large and small. This beautifully-produced, 36-page booklet is an enjoyable tribute to this beloved character actor—offering proof positive that his kill-crazed Pluto was the antithesis of the man himself. Consisting of one lengthy, breakfast-interview, Berryman is quizzed about his career highlights and responds with casual insights, beginning when he was working in a flower shop and discovered by George Pal , who cast him in DOC SAVAGE; his experiences on ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST; and cult-stardom in Wes Craven's terror-classic. [To digress, when I first saw HILLS, during a sold-out college screening in '79, it had women *literally* becoming ill and helped from the theatre, even as rows of Fraternity mongoloids were on their feet, cheering.] In addition, he talks about later projects, involving Ruggero Deodato (CUT AND RUN), Brandon Lee (THE CROW), and his STAR TREK connections. Crammed with photos, ad-artwork and insightful biographical info; best of all, this slim volume proves that Berryman is a thoughtful, complex man, and much more than his too-often-crazed, on-screen work allows him to convey.

MAGS, ZINES & SMALL-PRESS PUBLICATIONS

ALTERNATIVE CINEMA #15 (P.O. Box 371, Glenwood, NJ 07418; $10 for 2 issues). With a promise of devoting itself to "independent and underground filmmaking," this slick mag occasionally hits its marks, but more often, is devoted to videos they're distributing, including the artsy *Ashes and Flames* and the mock-Elvis-doc *Return of the King*.

ASIAN CULT CINEMA #22 (P.O. Box 16-1919, Miami, FL 33116; $6 apiece, or 6 issues for $30). The latest edition of this Asian film digest is as fascinating and informative as ever, with plenty of overseas news, lengthy reviews, solid articles (on Wong Kar Wai, the Giant Majin series, Bollywood), plus an interview with Nikkatsu pink-film director Masaru Konuma.

CARBON 14 #14 (P.O. Box 29247, Philadelphia, PA 19125; $18 for 4 issues). The latest edition of this cool alternative music mag is packed with band interviews, articles (my fave is a chronicle of a Las Vegas women's wrestling convention), and tons of reviews; while Dan Taylor's always-amusing Exploitation Retrospect insert features an interview with Debbie Rochen and savvy video reviews.

CASHIERS DU CINEMART #8 (Mike White, P.O. Box 2401, Riverview, MI 48192-2401; $2). Better late than never, CdC returns with all of the old attitude and (often self-deprecating) humor intact. This issue contains a tribute to *Black Shampoo* (White's "favorite film"), the making of *Mary Jane's Not a Virgin Anymore*, and Mike's dealings with the NYUFF. Very funny and recommended.

THE CHEESEPLANT #1 (Matt Blake, 27 Latymer Court, Hammersmith, London, W6 73D). For their premiere issue, this UK 'zine tackles the long-ignored world of Spy Films with an informative A-to-Z listing of the genre's best (*Danger: Diabolik*), the worst (there's too many to mention), and the strangest (*Flashman*). Heavy on retitlings and credits, several films are given in-depth reviews, and I only wish more received the same treatment.

CINEMAD #1 (Mike Plante, P.O. Box 43909, Tucson, AZ 85733-3909; $3 ppd). I truly enjoyed the freshman edition of this film digest, thanks to its interviews with avant-garde filmmaker Nina Menkes and composer David Shea. Although a bit on the heady side, with a long piece on Abbas Kiarostami, Mike also pays tribute to the beloved Elisha Cook Jr. and Warren Oates, and reviews gritty, longtime favorites such as *Fat City* and *Payday*.

EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA #16 (Craig Ledbetter, P.O. Box 12161, Spring, TX 77391-2161; $6). The long-missed ETC has returned with their special "Back from the dead" issue, which includes interviews with actor Donal O'Brien (*Trap Them and Kill Them*) and '60s sexpot Pamela Tiffin, plus loads of Euro-obscurity reviews—from Robbe-Grillet and Jess Franco, to my own observations on a Tinto Brass double bill. Send your bucks to Craig, because this mag truly deserves to survive.

EYE #18-20 (301 S. Elm Street, Suite 405, Greensboro, NC 27401-2636; $14 for 6-issues). A slick, always fascinating mag devoted to fringe culture and media. Topics of recent articles include 8-track tapes. Jim Goad, Peter Sotos, and Jack Stevenson's profile of filmmaker Sidney Pink (*Reptilicus*). Filled with book, 'zine and video reviews, and always well-written, this is one of my favorites.

GOREHOUND #30 (PL 178, 00521 Helsinki, Finland). The only downside to this slick film-mag? It's in a language I can't understand. Proving that cinematic deviance is appreciated around the world, the latest issue includes interviews with Ivan "The Terror" Cardoso, Mike Mendez and Russell Mulcahy.

HIP POCKET SLEAZE (John Harrison, 2 Glenbrae Court, Berwick, Victoria, Australia 3806). This one-shot digest-zine tackles the beloved subject of vintage adult paperbacks. Fueled by Harrison's love of his subject matter, and pocked with book-cover reproductions, he reviews several hilariously-scandalous books. Slim, but nostalgic fun.

LIQUID CHEESE #7-8 (Dave Kosanke, 8123 West Margaret Lane, Franklin, WI 53132; $4 ppd). A mag focusing on "movies and music to mangle your mind," the latest two issues are laced with reviews covering current film and video releases (including a justifiable savaging of Devlin & Emmerich's *Limpzilla*), a report from the 1997 Chiller Theatre convention, and even a couple concert reviews!

METASEX #2 (Michelle Clifford, P.O. Box 620, Old Chelsea Station, NY, NY 10011; $10 ppd.) The sophomore issue of this 62-page "journal of sexual curiosity" is filled with mind-blowing info from the glory days of the Times Square porn scene, courtesy of Michelle Clifford & Bill Landis. Along with several film reviews, this includes profiles of Zebedy Colt and "second-class stud" Dave Ruby, a terrific look at NYC's roughie grindhouses (and their notorious fare), and a review of *Boogie Nights* by porn-auteur Howard Ziehm. Highly recommended!

NEON MADNESS #4 (Andy Copp, P.O. Box 81, Dayton, OH 45404-0081$10 for 2-issues). A thick (80-page) Xerox-zine that revels in dozens of horror and cult video reviews—from studio aberrations such as *Crash* and *Boogie Nights*, to harder edged fare such as *Goodbye Uncle Tom*. There are also longer pieces on industrial band Pig and Marilyn Manson.

OUTRÉ #14-15 (Outré Subscriptions, P.O. Box 1900, Evanston, IL 60204; $20 for 4-issues). Covering the wide world of "UltraMedia," this amazing mag continues to highlight beloved, but often unsung figures. Recent articles include profiles of sexpots Julie Newmar and Anita Ekberg, artist Basil Wolverton, The Rat Pack, and a continuing history of Soviet sci-fi flicks. Well-written and invaluable.

REEL WILD CINEMA #4-5 (John Harrison, 2 Glenbrae Court, Berwick, Victoria, Australia 3806). This "journal of eclectic film & video" is a fun read, with their newest issues covering Ken Russell's horror films, *The Burning*, and reviews which hit all possible types of cheese—from *Roller Boogie* to *The Milpitas Monster*. My favorite feature in #4 is an interview with ex-Munster starlet, Pat Priest.

SAMHAIN #71 (77 Exeter Road, Topsham, Exeter, Devon EX3 OLX, England; $5.95). The latest edition of John Gullidge's UK horror mag features an interview with Clive Barker, the history of Neal Gaiman's *Neverwhere*, plus reviews of newly released films, videos and books. Its cut-rate paper stock is a big minus though.

SCREEM #10 (Darryl Mayeski, 490 S. Franklin St., Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702; $24 for 4-issues, or $5.95 for a single issue). Devoted to the wildest niches of horror 'n' sleaze, this mag just gets better (and slicker) with time. Their latest includes articles on the burgeoning world of DVD sleaze and H.R. Giger's adventures in NYC, plus their usual assortment of informative video and book reviews.

SEX AND GUTS #2 (Gene Suicide, 107 Havemeyer Street, Suite 17, Brooklyn, NY 11211; $6 ppd). Crammed with in-depth interviews (plus a handful of reviews), this 104-page journal is definitely a labor of rabid love. All of his subjects have deeply personal agendas, and although Gene spends a lot of time on aging NYC underground icons (yawn), stand-out interviews include directors Larry Fessenden (*Habit*) and Lech Kowalski (*Gringo, D.O.A.*). Written with passion (and an often acid tongue), this is one hell of a magazine.

SINEMA BRUT #3-4 (Keith Breese, 13918 E. Mississippi Ave. #341, Aurora, CO 80012; $14 for 4-issues, or $4 each). The latest two issues of this amusing and informative 'zine tackles Naschy's Waldemar Daninsky flicks, Isabel Sarli flicks, and a brief Q&A with director Jan Kounen (*Dobermann*). A top-notch combination of enthusiasm and intelligence, covering everything from obscure gems to EuroTrash even I wouldn't subject myself to.

STREETCLEANER #6 (1515 N. Town East Blvd. Suite 138-146, Mesquite, TX 75150; $1 or 3 stamps). If you think Shock Cinema covers a wide berth of films, you should see this 14-page review-'zine, which tackles everything from Cukor's *Camille* and *Satan's Sadist's*, to a misguided negative review of Alain Resnais' *Mon Oncle D'Amerique*.

TRASH TIMES #4-5 (Rich Behrens, P.O. Box 248, Glenview, IL 60025; $2 ppd). The latest two doses of this Xerox-digest includes music interviews with ex-Dead Boy Jeff Magnum and the outrageous Lightning Beat-Man, an eclectic range of movie reviews (from *The Wedding Singer* to *Ebola Syndrome*), plus music and 'zine reviews.

UNCUT #7 (Midnight Media, P.O. Box 211, Huntington, PE18 8WD, England). Crammed with video reviews of vile flicks that never made it to the UK intact (thanks to their dickhead censors), this covers a wide berth—from masturbatory art-crap like *Begotten*, to drive-in fare like *I Drink Your Blood*. There's also a cool interview with FX-master Sergio Stivaletti. Their website is at: http://www.midnight.media.demon.co.uk.

ZINE GUIDE #2 (P.O. Box 5467, Evanston, IL 60204; $6 ppd. with checks made payable to TAIL SPINS). Whether you're new or old to the 'zine-scene, this 188-page (!) mag is an essential investment, with info on hundreds of home-brewed publications. It also includes a lengthy zine-editors' forum, offering info on their roots, influences and how they paid for their first issues. Incredible!

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THE BEACH BUNNIES

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screenplay by Stephen Apostolof & Ed Wood, Jr.
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A magazine editor takes on the assignment of uncovering whether Hollywood asswipe "Rock Sanders" has had a sex change operation. For this she travels to a beach resort with three comely assistants, who's only purpose is to provide nice bodies and screw the male leads for your entertainment! #6169

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THE CLASS REUNION

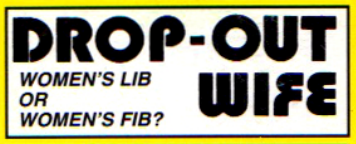
1972 • color
screenplay by Stephen Apostolof & Ed Wood, Jr.
with Rene Bond, Sandi Carey, Terry Johnson, Marsha Jordan, Mindy Brandt

In the "sequel" to **College Girls**, horny alumni get together at a local hotel for a weekend of hot sex, orgies and inane dialogue. The rest of the plot is basically a scorecard of who does what with whom! #6170

THE DIVORCEE

1969 • color
with Marsha Jordan, Deborah Downey, James Meyer, Liza Renay

When titular Betty finds her hubby in the sack with another woman, she divorces the bum and embarks on a virtual marathon of sex, sex and more sex; boozing it up and looking for love in all the wrong places (when she's not spilling her guts and confiding to a dolly)! #6039



DROP OUT WIFE

1972 • color
screenplay by Stephen Apostolof & Ed Wood, Jr.
with Angela Carnon, Terry Johnson, Forman Shane, Candy Samples

A beautiful, unhappy housewife leaves her abusive husband and jumps into the '70s swinger lifestyle with horny zeal, discovering that all men are dogs. Don't miss the living room orgy featuring an all-star cast of porn veterans! #6670

FUGITIVE GIRLS

1974 • color
screenplay by Stephen Apostolof & Ed Wood, Jr.
with Rene Bond, Ed Wood, Jr., Tally Wright, Donna Young

One of Apostolof's most popular movies! Five loose women break out of a work-farm prison to claim a half million bucks buried on the outside. Fleeing through the wilds of California, they stumble onto a hippie commune, steal a car, beat up some bikers, and take refuge in the isolated home of a crippled Vietnam vet and his hot Latina honey before finding the dough! #6671

HOT ICE

1978 • color
with Forman Shane, Teresa Parker, Michael Thayer, Patti Kelly

Winford and Charlotte, two international con artists, plan to steal a quarter of a million in diamonds from a ski resort's safe. As Charlotte gets the goods, Winford seduces the resort manager's nymphomaniac wife, while dodging her husband *and* her secret lover, the ski instructor! #6672

Hot Ice

LADY GODIVA RIDES

1969 • color
with Marsha Jordan, Forman Shane, Deborah Downey, Elizabeth Knowles

Only A.C. Stephen could have made a movie about Lady Godiva, Tom Jones, and a wild west town circa 1875! Marsha Jordan (playing the title character) takes off for the New World with a group of sexy broads. Highlights include a topless dance orgy on board ship, a catfight, and Lady Godiva's legendary nude horseback ride! #6673

MOTEL CONFIDENTIAL

1967 • b&w
with Pat Neice, Forman Shane, Vic Lance, Helena Clayton

Check in and witness the comings and goings of The Quickie Motel -- where the rooms are cheap and the women are cheaper! Lecherous bosses, unhappily married couples, newlyweds, philandering husbands, cheating wives, fags in drag, and more abound! #6674

OFFICE LOVE-IN

1968 • b&w
with Kathy Williams, Marsha Jordan, Forman Shane, Lynn Harris

Now these were the days when "sexual harassment" was the whole point of getting a job in the first place! Office girls get ahead by making the rounds with all the able-bodied men in the workplace. Now isn't this more fun than a lawsuit? #6675

SUBURBIA CONFIDENTIAL

1966 • b&w
with Gary Kent, John Andrews, Helena Clayton, Barbara Corey

A psychiatrist gives the lowdown on the secret sex lives of 6 house-wives-in-heat! Everything from seducing all sorts of salesmen (and *women*), to tickling fetishes, and cross-dressing. We say, shock treatment for them all! #6677

THE SNOW BUNNIES

1973 • color
screenplay by Stephen Apostolof & Ed Wood, Jr.
with Marsha Jordan, Rene Bond, Sandi Carey, Terry Johnson, Mindy Brandt

Marsha and her girlfriends head to the slopes in the hopes that they "might get male connected" - and indeed they do! Get ready for non-stop snow-*balling* and *cock*tails! #6676

WRONG WAY

1972 • color
with Becky Sharpe, Lynn Harris, Mindy Brandt, Jack Buddliner

Bikers! homicidal hippies! Tortured females! A totally degenerate film about two girls who take a detour down "a terrible road," instantly get car trouble, and are then "kid-napped and raped by a gang of jeepers," not to mention "captured by a band of hippie rats." Nasty, soft-X sleazy rider cinema! #6678

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